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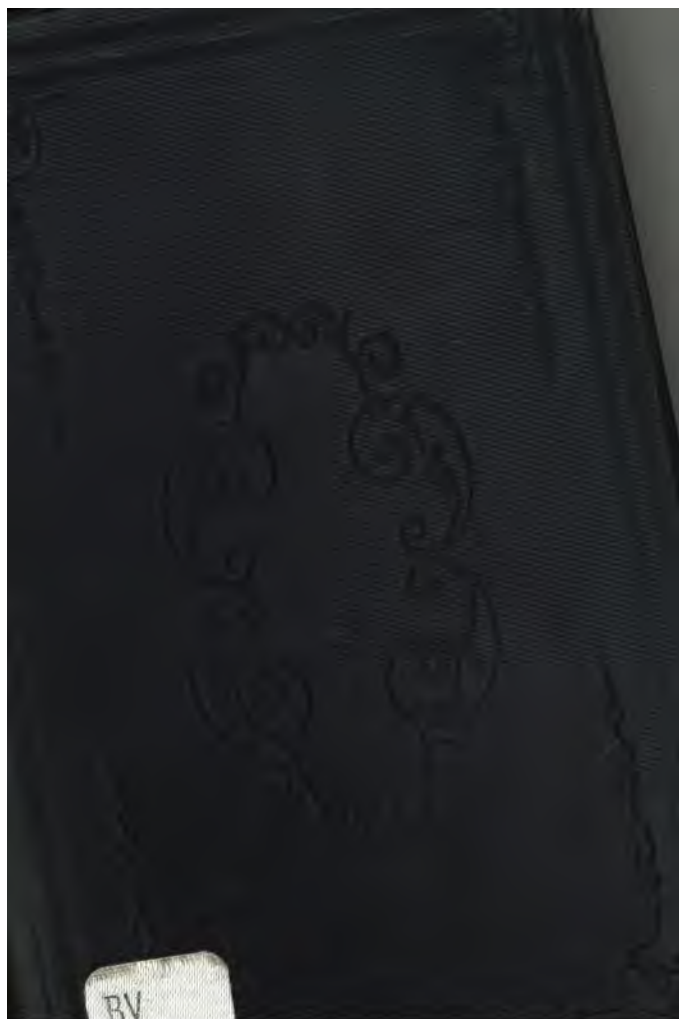
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THE
VISION OF FAITH,
A
SERIES OF SERMONS
ON
THE DECALOGUE,
AND
THE LORD'S PRAYER.

BY REV. I. D. WILLIAMSON, D. D., OF LOUISVILLE, KY.

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For
H. C.
1715

PREFACE.

The Discourses contained in this volume, were originally prepared in the ordinary course of sermonizing, and delivered to the congregation of which the author is Pastor. A brief report of several of them has been published, and the favor with which they were received, has induced the writer to comply with the oft repeated request for their publication in a suitable form for preservation. In this form they are now presented to the public, with many alterations from the original manuscript, and no doubt with many imperfections. In the view taken of the Prayer and the Decalogue, in many respects, the author has trod, what was to him an unbeaten path ; and the chief merit of the discourses, whatever it may be in amount, will be found in the hopeful and trustful view given of these important portions of the Divine Word. Hitherto, for the most part, the Decalogue has been viewed as a stern and inflexible mandate, from the existence of which, the wide world has little to hope, and much to fear ; and the Prayer, an earnest petition, which may indeed be offered to God, but of whose fulfilment, so far as the masses of our race are concerned, there is little or no prospect. If the author of this work

has succeeded in showing, that the former is an authoritative announcement of God's immutable law, which must be fulfilled in every jot and tittle ; and that the latter is but the expression of a true and living faith, which lays hold of the realities of man's destiny, and rests upon the authority of the Son of God, then it will be seen how full of the blessedness of hope, is the prospect here opened to the believing soul ; and how glorious is the "Vision of Faith," thus opened in the future of humanity. It is not without some degree of diffidence, that the author presumes to add another to the volumes of sermons from his pen, already before the public ; and yet the favor extended to his previous works, encourages him to hope that the present effort will meet with a generous reception. That it may be blessed to the upbuilding of the cause of truth and righteousness, and to the confirmation of the faith of the doubtful and despondent, in some small degree, at least, is the devout wish of

THE AUTHOR.

Louisville, Ky., March, 1852.

A COMPARATIVE VIEW

Of the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer, showing that the latter embraces the principles of the former, and contemplates its fulfilment.

1. RECOGNITION OF THE TRUE GOD.

DECALOGUE.

Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them.

PRAYER.

Our Father which art in Heaven.

2. REVERENCE FOR GOD.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain ; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Hallowed be thy name.

3. SUBMISSION AND OBEDIENCE.

Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work. But the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work.

Thy kingdom come;
thy will be done in earth
as it is in Heaven.

4. DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.

Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Give us this day our
daily bread.

5. THE EQUITY OF MERCY.

Thou shalt not kill.

And forgive us our
debts as we forgive our
debtors.

6. THE STRUGGLE WITH TEMPTATION.

Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

And lead us not into
temptation.

7. THE VICTORY OVER EVIL.

Thou shalt not covet
thy neighbor's house.
Thou shalt not covet thy
neighbor's wife, nor his
man servant, nor his
maid servant; nor his
ox, nor his ass, nor any-
thing that is thy neigh-
bor's.

But deliver us from
evil. For thine is the
kingdom, and the pow-
er, and the glory, for-
ever, Amen.

From the above, it will be seen, that while Moses is specific in pointing to outward acts, as the representatives of the principles of the law, Jesus deals directly with the principles themselves; and in all cases, the answer to the prayer is the fulfilment of the command. Thus, when the petition "Lead us not into temptation," is answered, men will no more commit adultery, or steal, or bear false witness; and so, when God's name is hallowed, men will no more take it in vain. But there is this obvious difference; while Moses prohibits the overt act, Jesus teaches us to pray for a spirit conformable to the law.

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SERMON I.

THE LAW OF GOD.

The law of the Lord is perfect.—PSALM xix. 7.

The following discourses will be devoted to a discussion of two important portions of the sacred record, each occupying a conspicuous position, in the dispensation to which it belongs. We refer to the Decalogue, and the Lord's Prayer. The one belongs to the Mosaic, and the other to the christian dispensation; and they embody alike, the first principles, and the spirit of the systems which they represent. Our object will be to consider them, in the relations they bear to each other, the duties they impose, the consummation to which they point, and the hopes they are calculated to inspire. The one, is an announcement of a law, and the other is the utterance of a prayer, and to these two topics therefore, law and prayer,

we may properly devote some general remarks, in the outset. Our present labor will be directed to the subject of LAW.

The term law, means a rule, and particularly, a permanent rule, prescribed by the governing power, whatever it may be. There are, of course, various kinds of laws, of which the following may serve as illustrations. Physical laws, are the rules by which matter of every species, tends to a particular form, or shape, and is regulated in its changes, motions, and relations; and these are invariable, under the same circumstances. Laws of nature, are rules of conduct arising out of the natural relations of human beings, as established by the Creator, and these also, are always the same, under the the same circumstances. Moral laws, are the laws which prescribe to men their religious, and social duties. Laws of nations, are the rules by which the intercourse of nations is regulated. Municipal laws, are the rules of civil conduct, prescribed by the supreme power of the State. Besides these, there are laws of vegetation, organic and

physiological laws, ecclesiastical laws, martial laws, and other forms of law too numerous to mention.

From the above it is manifest, that the term law, in its common acceptation, is often used to designate a mere precept, or rule, which may be arbitrary in itself, and entirely destitute of executive force, or binding authority. Thus, for instance, the State may promulgate a huge volume of municipal laws, and bind them in calf or muslin; and yet, they may be mere arbitrary precepts, having no foundation in the eternal principles of truth and duty; and the State itself may be utterly destitute of power to enforce them. Yet, men would call them laws. In like manner, a church may send forth its precepts, at war with all the realities of the universe, and be utterly without power to enforce obedience to the least of them; and still, they may be called "ecclesiastical laws." We apprehend, however, that the laws of God are not of this sort. The term law, when strictly applied to the enactments of the Almighty, means something more than a mere precept, which however good it may

be, is unaccompanied with the power necessary to enforce obedience to its requisitions. God is the Creator of the universe, and as such, he is the source and origin of all the rules, or laws, by which it operates. He is the supreme ruler of all that he has made, and the fountain of all true authority. Hence, every law that he makes, rests upon his authority, and is upheld by all the power of his throne. There may be precepts, which God has given, for the guidance of man, ere yet he has attained to, or understood the laws of his being; and these may, or may not be obeyed, for a time. But the permanent, the real and absolute laws of God, are perfect. They are as immutable as God himself, and as unchanging as fate; and their ultimate and perfect fulfilment, as certain, as that God sits on the throne of the universe. Hence the Savior said truly, "until heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled." This is law. Not a mere precept, but law in the strictest and the highest sense; and for this reason its failure is impossible.

That the laws of God, in nature around us, are thus permanent, binding and immutable, there can be no doubt. All the diversified operations of the material world, walk by rules, that are inflexible and unchangeable, and these rules are not mere precepts, but they are permanent, immutable and ever active laws, impressed upon creation by God's hand, in the very morning of its existence. The earth rolls upon her axis, and pursues her journey, in her orbit, nor turns aside, or pauses for an instant, in her course. Day succeeds to day, and night to night, with a regularity that never fails; and the seed time and the harvest, the summer and the winter follow each other, in a succession as rigorous and unwarying as fate itself; and all these, are the results of laws, God's laws, which he made and imposed upon the world, when first it came from his forming hand. To these laws of God, the whole universe yields obedience. They hold the earth "self balanced on her centre hung;" they guide the moon as she waxes and wanes—they move in the mighty sweep of

Jupiter and Uranus, and all the hosts of heaven are marshalled by them, and move in obedience to the enactments of the Most High. Nay more than this; not only the manifest harmonies of the universe, but even those things which present the appearance of irregularity, are obedient to law. The roar of the tempest as it sweeps the mighty forest, upon the land, or upheaves the mountain waves upon the sea; the thunder's awful voice, and the hail, that falls destructively upon the earth; all these, are the results of well appointed laws, to which the great mountains, and the small dust of the balance yield alike, an implicit and constant obedience. It were as easy to jostle the great globe from its orbit, or arrest the sun himself, in the midst of the firmament, as to pluck a grain of sand from the dominion of these laws, or cause one jot or one tittle of them to fail. We say then, that reasoning from what we know, we should naturally expect to find the like perfection in the moral laws of God. We should conclude that they are not mere precepts, arbitrarily put forth,

and having no foundation in the nature and fitness of things ; but they are eternal principles, inwrought in man's nature and relations, and having all the attributes of laws of God, by which the moral world is, and must be governed without a hair's breadth of deviation.

Such we take to be the laws of God ; and it is manifest, that, by whomsoever they may be announced, they are made, only by God himself ; they rest upon his authority, and are enforced by his power. It is to be remembered however, that the Mosaic system was a theocracy ; a government in which God was recognised, not only as the moral, but the civil ruler and king. It therefore embraces municipal as well as moral laws. Many of these municipal laws may be regarded only as precepts, applicable alone to the circumstances of the peculiar people to whom they were given. All these, may fail and pass away, and yet, no real law of God, in the strict sense of the word, shall be affected by this change or failure. The precepts, or if you please to call them such, the

laws, appertaining to the peculiar form of temporal government, set up for one nation, for the regulation of their civil or municipal policy are one thing. But the eternal principles of the moral law, binding upon all nations, enacted of God himself, and emanating from the throne of the universe; these are different matters, and the two should not be confounded. The one is imperfect, the other is perfect. The one may pass away; but the other shall remain while the throne of God stands.

This brings us to the Decalogue, which we hold to be not merely preceptive, but positive law. It is the embodiment and announcement of the absolute laws of God, in their rudimental principles, so far as those laws were made known under that dispensation. Of this Decalogue, as a whole, at the hazard of incurring the charge of repetition, we desire distinctly to state, and illustrate the following propositions.

1. It is an announcement of absolute and universal law. It is not a mere municipal law, binding upon one nation only; but it is

a universal law of humanity, binding alike upon all nations, and upon all men. It is not a mere precept of Moses, resting upon his authority, and enforced only by his power; but it is the law of God, announced upon the authority of Jehovah himself, and enforced by the undeniable fact, true now and forever, that, without conformity to it, no individual can be happy, no nation, or people can prosper.

That such is the nature of the law here announced, is evident from the fact, that its fundamental principles enter into the jurisprudence of all enlightened nations, even to the present day; and in all the lapse of ages, from the time of Moses, to this moment, there has never been even a respectable attempt to form a government upon any principles of righteousness, which has not recognised the rudiments of the Decalogue, as laws that might not be transcended. This single fact speaks volumes for its divine origin, and its absolute reality as the LAW of God. Let those who insist that it is but a mere invention of Moses, or a precept of

his, destined to pass away, and without any divine authority, consider for a moment, and they will not fail to see, that their hypothesis involves them in serious difficulties.

Moses lived in a barbarous and ignorant age, ere yet the light of science or philosophy had shone upon the world. That he was ignorant of the laws of the material universe, and knew not so much as the fact of the earth's rotation upon its axis, is quite manifest. That he was brought up among an idolatrous, superstitious and corrupt people, who knew not God or his laws, is equally evident. That he was himself a deceiver, and an impostor, is roundly asserted. Be it so. But it surely devolves upon those who thus affirm, to account for the facts already noted. How happens it, that from the bosom of idolatrous Egypt, where men worshipped they knew not what, there arose a man, to announce the sublime truth of One only living and true God, whom eye had not seen, nor ear heard, and to command his worship as the first duty of man? How comes it to pass, that this man, who was

bred in the midst of corruption, oppression and vice, and who was an imposter and deceiver, should have an insight into the laws of man's moral nature so clear and distinct, that he could embody in ten short commandments, a code, embracing the rudiments of all law—a code which should stand the test of ages, and find its way into the jurisprudence of all enlightened nations, for thousands of years—a code, the principles of which could no more be spared from the world, this day, than the sun could be spared from the firmament—a code, without which no sane man, would think of building up a system of morals, or of government, more than he would think of erecting a pyramid without the laws of gravity. Tell us how all this happened, without the interposition and inspiration of God, and you will present the world with a miracle, more wonderful than it has yet seen.

But, whatever explanation may be given of the phenomna thus presented is of little consequence. There stands the stubborn fact, which can neither be disguised nor dis-

puted. The Decalogue does absolutely announce principles of action, whose truth and justice, no man of common discernment can deny for one moment—principles and laws without which no human society can exist in peace or prosperity, and the practice of which, is absolutely indispensable to the welfare of our race. Hence we say, that Moses announced THE LAW; and the experience of the ages has proved, that it is no arbitrary precept, but the absolute law of God, having its foundation in the very nature and relations of man, and hence made and authorised of God himself.

An instance or two will serve as an illustration of the argument. Polytheism in all its forms, is, and ever has been, a curse to man, for the simple reason, that his spiritual nature is so made, that he craves, and is satisfied with nothing short of the knowledge and worship of the one God. Hence, it is not the precept merely, but it is the permanent law of man's being, that forbids him to have any other Gods but the Lord his Maker. Again. Idleness is a curse alike

to the physical and the moral nature of man, for the body rusts without exercise, and vice grows up in the soul of the sluggard. But excessive and constant toil is an evil also, for the powers of the body and mind long taxed, must have time to rest and recruit their energies, or they fail. Hence, it is not a mere precept, but a permanent law of our being, which requires alternations of labor and rest. When Moses said "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh is the Sabbath, in it thou shalt not do any work," he gave not a precept of his own invention, but he announced the law of humanity, impressed upon man's nature, by the God that made him. And so we might go on, through all the commands of the Decalogue, and it would appear, not only that it ranks above the mere precept, but that it stands forth in the character of an absolute law, and is perfect in its kind and in its adaptation to man's nature and relations.

It may be observed further, in regard to the Decalogue, as an announcement of the law of God, that it is rudimental in its form.

We mean by this, that it deals with first principles, but enters not into the detail of particulars, to which that principle may be applied. It states not all the specific points, but it selects some one duty founded upon a principle, and that it enjoins ; or, it takes up some one evil, indicative of a disregard of principle, and that it prohibits. Thus, for example. Reverence for the name of God, and for his laws, is a sentiment, without which, there can be little true obedience to him ; and irreverence is an open fountain of evil. Both may show themselves in a thousand forms and phases. But the Decalogue descends not to these particulars. On the contrary, it selects one point only, as the germ, and utter its authoritative mandate. "Thou shalt not take the name of thy God in vain," and thus rudimentally announces the law which enjoins all reverence to God, and sternly forbids all irreverence for his name. And so again. "Honor thy father and thy mother," is the first rudiment of that distributive justice, which is mindful of the claims of others, and renders honor to

whom honor, and tribute to whom tribute is due; and we may safely say, that there was never an eminently just or righteous man on earth, who did not commence his upward course with obedience to that law. Nor is there the slightest hope, that the principles of justice will ever be applied to human affairs, until this law shall be fulfilled, in this its mere alphabet.

We need not dwell on this point. What we have already said, will give you our idea; that this law instead of bringing out and explaining the abstract principle, and following it out in all its ramifications and possible manifestations, seized upon some prominent act, indicative of the principle, and enforced or prohibited this, and that, except in one instance, it contemplated the overt act, rather than the feelings and motives from which it proceeded.

Christianity goes deeper than this: follows the outward acts to their sources, and lays its interdict, or its command upon them; for it is a further developement, and illustration of that perfect law, whose rudiments are announced in the Decalogue.

2. Our next general remark upon the Decalogue is, that it is a high form of prophecy.

This conclusion flows legitimately from what we have offered above. If it be true that we have here, an announcement of the LAW, the irrevocable and eternal law of God, binding alike upon all men, in all ages; then, evidently, we have also the announcement of human destiny; for the fulfillment of the law is the destiny of the race. Let us illustrate. In the material universe, the physical laws are the sure indications of the destiny of matter; and hence, you have only to find the laws which the Creator has impressed upon any given portion of matter, in order to predict its destiny; because to that destiny, the law itself is the unerring index. Thus, water is a fluid, and being subject to the law of gravity, it seeks its level always. Go now to the mountain side, and you may find gushing forth beneath some rock, a fountain of water. Ask you its destiny? If you know the laws by which it is governed, you need not ask; for the answer is before you. It will seek its level,

and flow on, and flow ever, until it has reached this destiny. It may be long in attaining this end. It may leak from rock to rock, and whirl in giddy eddies. It may be obstructed in its course, and encounter barriers that seem impassable. It may flow towards the north, and towards the south. It may rush down the mountain side, with surprising velocity, and with the noise of the cataract; and then, it may slowly wind its devious way, as it murmurs in the valley. Nay, it may be caught up into the air, and sail through the skies in the form of vapor, and fall in drops of rain upon far distant lands; but it cannot escape from the laws by which the Creator has bound it; and as he lives, and his laws fail not, its destiny is in the bosom of the great deep, and all the powers of earth cannot prevent this consummation. So it is with the laws to which God has subjected humanity, and with the Decalogue as their epitome. If it be indeed true, that its announcements are not mere evanescent and powerless precepts, but laws, real laws—laws of God, the governor

and supreme ruler of all things; then is their announcement a "sure word of prophecy," indicating human destiny with a certainty as infallible as that with which the great globe moves in its orbit, or the planets wheel their circles through the skies; and you may as well attempt to defeat the one, as the other, for they are guided and moved by the laws of the same God.

Fourier, the great French philosopher, who has suffered as much from the extremes of adulation and abuse, as often falls to the lot of one man, and who is in all truth, among the most profound investigators of the laws of nature, that the world has seen, announces it as a law of God, that the universe is governed by attraction, and that so far as sentient beings are concerned, attractions are proportioned to destinies; that is, if we understand him; the permanent impulses, or laws, to which every being is subjected, form the index to his destiny, which destiny must be achieved. This has been lauded by his followers, as one of the most remarkable and brilliant discoveries of the

age. But, if the Decalogue is indeed what we have shown it to be, the announcement of the permanent and unalterable laws to which God himself has subjected humanity; why then, the destiny of man is plain; and the discovery of Fourier, was anticipated by some eighteen centuries, by that declaration of the Savior, "Until heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." We say not, that Fourier's doctrine is not true, but merely that its claims to the name of a discovery, may be somewhat questionable, when viewed in connection with these teachings of the Savior. At all events, the testimony of Jesus here quoted, settles the question, that God's law shall be fulfilled in every jot and tittle; and points thus, with unerring certainty, to the destiny of our race. And thus sets the seal of the highest and most absolute form of prophecy, upon that Decalogue in which the eternal law of God is announced. When that law in all its parts, and in all its length and breadth shall be fulfilled, without the

abatement of one "jot or tittle," blindness itself can perceive what human destiny must be.

There is one more remark we have to offer upon the Decalogue, considered as a revelation of the laws of God, and an index to the destiny of our race. It is not arbitrarily propounded. It leaps not with a single bound from the beginning to the end. But it is progressive, and the several steps in this progress, are set down with philosophical accuracy, and in regular consecutive order. These steps are seven in number; for although the commandments are usually reckoned as ten, yet in principle, they may all be comprehended in seven. The first is the abjuration of all idolatry, and the recognition of one, and but one God, as expressed in the command "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," and the subsequent specific prohibition of all idolatry. The second step is the natural result of the first. It is deep reverence for God enjoined in the command, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." The third, flows

naturally from reverence. It is passive submission, and active obedience, always the result of reverence ; and it is set forth in the regulation of rest and labor thus. "Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work ; but the seventh is the sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any work." The fourth step is distributive justice, applied to that abundance which will flow from obedience to the laws of labor and rest ; and the rudiment of which, is indicated in the first command with promise, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." The fifth step, is the equity of mercy, inculcating forgiveness, and prohibiting revenge, indicated in that law which says, "Thou shalt not kill." The sixth, is the struggle with temptation, enjoined in the commands, "Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." The seventh, and last, is the control and mastery of the passions, or the victory

over evil, rudimentally set forth in the command, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man servant, nor his maid servant, nor aught that is thy neighbor's." And thus the announcement of the law, and the destiny of man, rises step by step, from the simple recognition of God, up to the destruction of all acts of wickedness, and the victory over the evils of men's thoughts and passions. We pause not now to enlarge upon the successive steps in this upward movement, or to show how naturally and philosophically they succeed each other. That work will be done as we proceed with our investigation. Enough has been said to show that this Decalogue is a most remarkable production—that its author saw with a clear and distinct vision, the laws of the Creator as binding upon humanity, and in a few brief words pointed to the destiny of our race, and indicated the steps in that scale of progress, by which that destiny is to be achieved. Thus does it appear, that the Psalmist was right in saying, "The law of the Lord is perfect," and we would if we

could, repeat with an emphasis that should be remembered, that declaration of the Savior, which saith, "Until heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled."

SERMON II.

TRUE PRAYER.

After this manner therefore pray ye.—**MATT. vi. 9.**

Having in a previous discourse, treated at some length upon the subject of law, introductory to the view we propose taking of the Decalogue, we shall, in the present, offer some suggestions upon the general subject of prayer, preliminary to our exposition of that admirable form given us by the Savior. There are few things in regard to which the men of every age have been more unanimous, than in their admission of the propriety and utility of prayer in some sort and after some manner. Its forms are changing and various; but there is in the human soul a feeling of dependance, which instinctively leads us to a higher power, to whom application may be successfully made for help, if at no other time, at least in those emer-

gencies in which the arm of flesh is felt to be weak, and the spirit cowers and sinks before the opposition it has to encounter. Hence there are few men on earth who never pray; and the sun in his course, through the ages of the past, has shown upon an exceedingly small number, if any, absolutely prayerless men. On the contrary, in all ages and climes, and in all grades and conditions of life, the voice of prayer has been heard. It dwells not alone in temples, and around altars reared to "Gods many, and Lord's many," where multitudes assemble to pay their devotions in the great congregation; but it is with the lone pilgrim in his journey, as he wanders far from the habitations of men, and its voice is heard alike, by the simoon that sweeps the sands of Sahara, and the cloud that settles upon the deep forests of Oregon. It is heard in the thronged city, where the busy masses rush, and jostle each other in the crowd; and it speaks in a sweeter voice, from the valley and the glen, where the rustic husbandman earns his bread in the sweat of his brow. It goes up

not only from abodes of industry and homes of peace ; but it ascends from tented fields, where the mail-clad hosts meet in the shock of battle ; and pleads in the groans of the wounded, and the wail of the dying, who have no helper but God. It is heard from the highest mountains, and the deepest vales of earth ; and from the wide waters of the ocean, where the mariner spreads his sail to the breeze, and the solitary ship rides upon the rolling wave, there are voices of prayer ascending, and calling for strength in weakness, guidance in difficulty, and safety and protection in the hour of danger. And thus, the earth as it rolls, sends up from every spot of its vast surface, one volume of invocation, one cloud of incense from prayerful spirits. We say not, of course, that these prayers are enlightened devotions, offered in sincerity to the true God ; or that they come up to the christian ideal of genuine prayer. We only say, that men everywhere do pray in some sort, and after some manner ; and this fact, we offer as proof, that prayer is not an exotic plant, imported

from some foreign clime ; or needing a forcing hot-bed process to bring it to maturity. On the contrary, it is the spontaneous growth of every land—a deep and irrepressible want of the human soul.

Accordingly, prayer enters into and forms an important part of every system of religion, that the world has ever seen. It is not surprising, therefore, that the author of our religion had respect to this want of the soul, and in common with all who had gone before him, recognised the propriety and utility of prayer. Thus far, there is nothing peculiar in the teachings of Christ. But there is a striking peculiarity in the views he gives us of the true nature of prayer, and the ends and objects for which it should be employed. To these points we intend, mainly, to invite your attention, in the present discourse.

1. Prayer, what is it?

Probably a better answer cannot be given to this question, than that which is furnished by the poet, as follows :

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed.”

It is understood, of course, that this desire is united with an intelligence which recognises the existence, and the government of God ; and that it yearns towards him, as the source from which its satisfaction must come. A mere blind desire, grovelling in the dust, and seeking its object in self-indulgence, or by means of our own unaided strength, cannot properly be called prayer ; because the very idea of prayer, necessarily supposes that there is a being to whom it is offered, and from whom an answer is expected. When therefore, we say, as we have said, that all men pray, we do not mean merely, that they have ardent, sincere, and earnest desires ; for these the beasts have, yet they pray not. But we intend to be understood, that there is in man, an intelligence, which recognises the existence of superior powers, and unto them, his desires go out for aid, invoking their presence and their assistance. In this sense, we understand that the "soul's sincere desire" is prayer, in its essential character. Whether that desire clothes itself in words, and is uttered in the form of

a petition ; or, whether it breathes in the silence of thought, in the hour of meditation, is of no consequence so far as its existence and reality are concerned. Nor, does it matter, so far as our present inquiry is concerned, whether the being to whom the desire is offered is real, or imaginary. It may be offered to an idol, or image of wood, or stone ; or, it may appeal to the sun, moon, and stars, which superstition has invested with the power of Gods, and still, to the individual by whom it is made, it will be truly prayer, in all the elements of its essential character.

Christian prayer, as distinguished from prayer in this general sense, has the following striking peculiarities.

1. It is offered to God—to the one only living and true God.

Christianity acknowledges one, and but one, infinite and Eternal Spirit, who is the Creator of all worlds, and all intelligences, and who reigns through all the immensity of "creation's ample round," without a rival or competitor. It assures us, that all other

Gods are vain, for "the Lord he is God, & besides him, there is none else." Him or is man allowed to worship and adore. T doctrine was beautifully, and most strikingly illustrated and enforced by the Sav. When the tempter offered him all the kingdoms of the world, if he would fall do and worship him, the answer was, "It written, thou shalt worship the Lord : God, and him only shalt thou serve." I plain, then, that Jesus allows no prayer, act of worship to be offered to any but G And this is a characteristic of christ prayer. The heathen pray to their h gods, and to a thousand subordinate divities; and from altars that are called christian, prayers ascend to the Virgin Mary, & a whole calendar of saints, who were n as we are; and though we cannot affi that these are not prayers, in a gene sense, yet, christian prayers they most c tainly are not.

2. Another peculiarity in christian pray is, that it is mingled with faith.

The instructions of the Savior upon t

point are clear and explicit. His language is, "I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." "All things whatsoever, that ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." In like manner, the Apostle exhorts all men everywhere to pray, "lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting;" and assures us, that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." These references are deemed sufficient authority for saying that the presence of a living faith is essential to a truly christian prayer. As christians, it is our privilege to see in God, the all perfect, and the all wise, and good, all whose purposes are gracious, and whose government is ordered in love, and established in justice, and mercy; and hence, our duty to be, at all times, submissive to the divine will; so that we can always pray "thy will be done." For this reason, no man has any right to ask of God anything in prayer, which he does not believe to be embraced in the divine pleasure and purposes. The moment a man thus asks, what

he does not believe God intends to grant ; that moment he exalts himself above his Creator—assumes that he is able “to teach eternal wisdom how to rule ;” claims to know better than God, what is best for the universe, or else manifests the truth, that he considers himself of so much more consequence than others, that their good must be sacrificed to meet his convenience. In either case, it is sin, and as such, is prohibited by the simple fact, that we are required to pray in faith. This view of faith, as an essential ingredient in christian prayer, is calculated to exercise a salutary, restraining, and regulating influence upon the desires of the heart. It is not with every momentary, or imaginary want, originating in whim, or caprice, that we must go to God in prayer. It is not, with unhallowed desires seeking only their own gratification, and unmindful of the interests of others, equally sharing the divine favor and protection ; not with these, are we allowed to appeal to the Infinite One ; but with clean hands and pure hearts, with desires purified, chastened, and subdued to

obedience, and submission to his will, must we approach the altars of eternal mercy, asking that, and that only, which an enlightened, living faith assures us it is God's pleasure to grant; and when thus we ask, the assurance is, we shall receive.

As contrasted with this, most shocking indeed, is the irreverence of men, even in their prayers. In the frenzy of feeling, and under the influence of base, earth-born passions, men rush to the altars of their God, and put up their prayers for vengeance upon their enemies; and invoke the arm of the Lord as the instrument of their own revenge or malice. Mistaking often the fever of lust, for the desire of the soul, they cry unto heaven for aid, in the accomplishment of schemes of wickedness which, if consummated, would "devour the widow's house and orphan's bread," and immolate the interests of the poor, upon the altar of lust or mammon. And then again, even in Christian temples, there is an irreverence both of matter and manner, which shows that the faith which leans upon God, and bows sub

missively to his holy will, is often wanting. God is familiarly addressed as an equal ; nay, sometimes, even in the aspect of a menial, bound to go at the nod or beck, and do the bidding of a frail worm of the dust. Regardless of the established principles of his government, and the determinate counsels of his will, by which heaven and earth must abide, the invocation is, that God will come down, and make bare his arm, in some party scheme, having for its real object the aggrandisement of a sect, or the glorification of a man, who is at the bottom of the movement. More than this ; I fear there are comparatively few, among the professors of christianity, who habitually remember, that faith is the boundary, and the limit of true christian prayer. For this cause, they think it no wrong constantly to pray, in the very teeth of the sermons to which they listen, and the creeds which they most assuredly believe. Importunately, and ever, do they plead with God for salvation upon those who they believe to be doomed, by his will, to hopeless and remediless damnation ; thus

exalting their benevolence above that of their Creator, and setting up their own will against the will of heaven. To all such, there is a lesson in the fact that faith is a necessary element in true christian prayer, to which they would do well to give most earnest heed.

3. Another peculiarity, in the christian idea of prayer is, that it is equally acceptable, in one place as another, and in one form as another.

Other systems, as a general thing, insist that prayer must be offered, in temples, or at altars, dedicated to this service. They provide, that prayers shall be uttered in set forms of speech, with a particular posture of the body; and accompanied with certain rites, and ceremonies, else they will not be heard.

But this is far, very far, from the true christian idea, upon the subject. God is vitally and essentially present at all times, and in all places; and neither in Gerezim, nor Jerusalem, is the exclusive place where he is to be worshipped. On the contrary, he

asks not bended knees, or altars, or consecrated groves; but he requires the adoration of the spirit, and "they that worship him, must worship in spirit, and in truth."

Moreover, God sees the heart, and is acquainted with all its thoughts, and purposes. Wherever, there is an humble and contrite spirit; a soul that feels its weakness, and its dependance—yet, tuned to harmony with the ways of God—leaning with confiding faith, and trustful hope, upon the strong arm of the Lord, full of love and rich with desires of good upon a kindred race; there is the man of prayer. Whether that man is in the temple, or at the altar, or not; whether he stands in the congregation of worshippers, or kneels in the secrecy of his own closet; whether he is in the mart of business, or the family circle—whether he travels upon the land, or sails upon the ocean, is of no consequence, so far as the matter of prayer is concerned. And further; whether the prayer is uttered by the devout Catholic, as he counts his beads, at the sound of an unknown tongue—in the fiery zeal, and

burning pathos, of the Methodist—the rigid tones, and measured sentences of the Calvinist—in the stately forms, and sturdy English of the Episcopalian—in the polished, college phrase of the Unitarian, or the expressive silence of the Quaker; it is still a prayer, that God will hear and answer. Coming from pure and humble hearts, and being baptised in the spirit of living faith, and holy love, it will rise as a sweet memorial before the throne of God, in the heaven of heavens, and call a blessing down to earth. To mistake the mere form of a prayer, for the prayer itself, is, as if we should substitute a garment for a man. The truth is, it is not the garment, that makes a man; nor is it the form, that constitutes the prayer.

It is doubtless true, that there is a natural disposition, in man, to embody his intenser feelings, and set them forth in forms; and give them an outward birth, in words. Hence there is propriety, and utility, in oral prayer, either by book, or without it; but all its utility and truthfulness, depends upon the question, whether it is, or is not, a true expres-

sion of the spirit from which it claims to proceed. If it is so, then is it not uttered in vain ; but, if it is not so ; then is it a mere mask of deception, which though beautiful, without, is within, full of all hypocrisy and deceit.

If the Savior has indicated, the appropriate place for prayer, saying, " When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father, who is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly ; " a liberal spirit of interpretation will perceive, that it was not because a prayer would be more acceptable from a closet, than from any other place ; but for the better reason, that, there, in the silence of retirement, shut out from the noise and bustle of a busy world, and away from its glare and tinsel, which so attract our gaze, and chain us down to earth, the soul could more readily, meditate of God, and rise to communion with the spiritual and the invisible. It is not, that God will accept *only* the prayers, that are made, in a closet ; but, it is because, there,


the purest and best prayers will be likely to be offered.

And thus again, if Christ gave his disciples a form of prayer, it is not thence to be inferred, that he intended that they should always be tied to this exact form of words. He gave them the manner after which their prayers should be made; but by no means intended to teach, that no prayer could be acceptable to God, unless it came clothed in this precise language. It breathes the spirit that should pervade our hearts, and indicates the desires that it is proper for us to lay upon the altar of our God; but, was never intended to dictate the precise manner in which our lips should move. As a matter of fact, we may add, that Jesus himself seemed practically, to attach but little importance to the time, the place, or the form of prayer. If the temple is the only place where prayer could be properly made; and if the voice is the only medium, through which the spirit can hold converse with God in prayer; then Christ, our example, was not a man of prayer. Not often,

did he engage in oral prayer. A few instances, only, are recorded, in which the eye of man saw him at prayer. Judging after the ordinary standard, even of the present day, he would be called a prayerless man. But if submission to the divine will, fervent love for man—ardent desires for human good—and constant reliance upon divine aid; if these are prayer, then was his whole life one continued prayer, and its every act, an appeal to heaven for a blessing upon the world. The whole history that remains of him, is fraught with evidence, that his “meat and drink, was to do the will of his Father,” and that his soul was filled with love to man, and desires for human good which found their expression, not so much in formal prayers, as in mighty deeds. Surely, he whose love for man, led him to do, and dare, and die for our sakes, had no need of words to tell us, that his was a constant spirit of prayer, that yearned ever, for blessings upon our race.

4. Another feature of prayer, is, that it is a high form of prophecy.

If it be true that prayer is uttered in accordance with a law of man's being, and that man by an impulse of his nature looks up to God for his blessing, then it is most evidently a prophetic voice, announcing in the soul, and in all men everywhere the truth of blessings to come. Or if prayer indicates the permanent laws of the human soul, then also is it an indication of human destiny ; for no man can suppose for a moment, that God would implant in the very nature of man, an irresistible impulse to pray, if it was not his purpose to hear and answer prayer. Thus prayer, in general, assumes the prophetic form and points to good things to come. In an especial manner, is the Lord's prayer to be regarded as prophetic. We have before seen, that faith is an essential ingredient in true prayer. Hence it is no more certain that Jesus has given us a form of prayer, and directed us to pray for certain blessings, than, that he has authorised us to believe that these blessings will be given us. Coming from him, permission to pray for any good, is permission to believe that it will be



received ; and the same authority that authorizes the prayer, authorizes also the faith. The strong and emphatical language of the Savior, upon the subject of faith in prayer is, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, *believe* that ye shall receive them." In the Lord's prayer he has told us what things to pray for ; and he has before taught us to believe that we shall receive them. There is therefore, but one alternative : either he requires us to believe in that which is uncertain and delusive, or else, as a prophet of God, and upon all the responsibility that belongs to him, he teaches us that these blessings are our inheritance ; and hence this prayer is a positive prophecy of blessings reserved for us in the counsels of God, without whose ultimate bestowment all faith is falsified, and all prayer a delusion.

2. The end and object of prayer, what is it?

In examining this matter, there are to be noted, some primary truths, which stand as solid landmarks, of which we must not lose sight for a moment. God is the Governor of

the Universe, and the destiny of all created beings is in his hands. He is moreover, immutable; the same yesterday, to-day, and forever, and knows not, even the shadow of a change. His government is established, and its principles are as changeless, as God himself; so that not one of them can be altered, to suit the convenience, or gratify the whim of any living being, high, or low. Not at the request of the highest seraph, that adores, at the foot of his throne, nor at the instance of all the hosts of heaven, could God change his plans, or alter one of the principles of his government. It is already perfect, and if altered at all, it must be for the worse, for it cannot be better. These, we take to be cardinal, fundamental truths, which may not be disputed, and must not be contravened, in our views of prayer.

It follows, of course, that the true end, and object of prayer, is not to placate the wrath, secure the favor, move the pity, change the purposes, or have any effect whatever upon the Deity. God is already as good and gracious, as perfection itself,

and the man who imagines, that his prayers can change God, in any degree, ought not to pray; for if God changes at all, it will be for the worse, for again we say, he cannot be better. But the idea, that our feeble petitions can move the infinite God, by the breadth of a single hair, from the plans, and purposes, that his "first thoughts designed," is of all others, most preposterous. It is the *heathen*, not the christian view of prayer; and is well enough with those whose Gods are "changeable, partial, passionate, unjust;" but, should find no favor with the man, whose "God is of one mind, and none can turn him."

Is the reply at hand, if this be so, then there is no use in prayer? Mahomet thought otherwise. He discovered, indeed, that the mountain would not come to him; but he saw, that it remained for him to go to the mountain. So, also, of the illustration often employed. The man in a boat in the middle of the river, having hold of a rope made fast to the shore, knows right well, that pull as he may, he cannot move the shore to

him. Nevertheless, he pulls right heartily, knowing equally well, that he can thus draw himself to the shore. And this is the true idea, of the utility of prayer. It moves not God, but man; it affects not God's plans, but it does improve man's heart, and often changes his counsels.

God has so made man, and so established his government, that prayer like every other exercise of the soul, has its own peculiar blessings, which can come through no other means. We have all need, yea, more I fear, than we appreciate, have we need of a constant sense of the presence of our Heavenly Father—of deep and heartfelt submission to his will—of satisfaction with his government—of reconciliation to the allotments of his providence—of a forgiving spirit, and a sense of sins forgiven—of increasing and ever growing desires for the good of others—of reliance upon God for strength, in the hour of temptation, of hope, for deliverance from all evil—and of cheerful reliance upon that sleepless care of God, that from day to day, supplies our every want. And these

blessings, so rich, and valuable, come upon the soul, *only* through the prayer of faith. How soon does a little child forget his father, if he never sees him or speaks to him! So soon, does the man forget God, and his duty to him, who neglects to commune with him in prayer.

Well, then, might the Savior teach his disciples to pray, and well might the Apostle exhort us to “pray without ceasing.”

SERMON III.

RECOGNITION OF THE TRUE GOD.

Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.

Exodus xx. 3.

Our Father which art in Heaven.—Matt. vi. 9.

The first step in religion, as well as the first movement in the scale of human progress, is the recognition of the one living and true God. Idolatry and Polytheism in all their forms are debasing in their influence. They degrade man in his own estimation, make him the trembling slave of capricious powers, bind him down to earth, and effectually check his upward aspirations after the good and the true. No hope can there be of much real improvement in any individual soul, or in any nation or people, until the great truth of the existence of one living and true God is known and acknowledged. With this truth therefore, the Decalogue

properly commences ; and it is not the least among the evidences of the divine authenticity of the mission of Moses, that he thus begins with the fundamental law upon which all human exaltation must proceed, and announces in the outset, the basis, on which the experience of six thousand years has proved, that all hope of permanent and healthful improvement must rest. He hurls his denunciations against all idolatry, in the midst of an idolatrous age, denouncing it as an open fountain of evil, and thundering against it the severest penalties of the law. This was the starting point, and this fact explains many of the facts recorded in the history of Moses and the people of whom he was the teacher and leader. The question he had to meet, was not, which of all the Gods that then claimed the adoration of the people, was best or most trustworthy ; but it was, which was in fact God. Hence the wonderful displays of Almighty power, and the reason uniformly given for them, " That they may know that the Lord he is God, and beside him there is none else." Little

was said of the character of God, and indeed it were unnecessary to say much upon that head until the previous question of God's unity and supremacy was settled. This, therefore occupies a conspicuous place in the system of Moses, and stands first among the principles of the Decalogue.

The same idea of the supremacy and undivided unity of God, is recognised in the first sentence of the Lord's prayer. The fact that we are directed to pray to him, is an acknowledgement of his supremacy. But the Savior went farther than Moses. He not only disallowed idolatry, and recognised God as one and supreme ; but he taught us to approach him in the character of a friend and a father. We may properly say in this place. that in our judgment the form of prayer he has given us, indicates rather the manner of prayer, than the precise words in which it should be couched, as is evident from the fact that it was not exclusively used either by Christ or his early disciples. Of all forms of prayer ever presented to the world, we must not omit the remark, that

this is, for general use, incomparably the best, and most perfect. So brief that it may be remembered, and so simple that it may be understood by the child, it nevertheless embraces the full range of the ordinary topics of devotion, and its every word presents a depth and profundity of meaning, which the hoary sage can never exhaust. It is therefore fitted alike to all capacities, and may be used with propriety by all grades and conditions of men, through all time. Not a word can be taken from it, without losing its entireness, nor can one be added, without marring its symmetry; and we may say without danger of contradiction, that in all the treasures of language, there is not to be found such riches of meaning, in words so few, and so appropriate; nor can one well imagine a human being, young or old, high or low, rich or poor, wise or simple, saint or sinner, for whom under any, or all circumstances, this prayer would not be an appropriate and beautiful form for his communion with God. A blessed boon has this prayer been to the world! The loss of huge

libraries that might be named, would be light and small, compared with that which would accrue, if these blessed words were blotted from the memory of man ; and there are whole chapters of the divine word itself, that could be better spared, than this simple prayer. To it, no doubt, most of us are indebted, for some of the deepest and most permanent religious impressions, as well as the sweetest memories that linger in the soul through life. I pity the man who has forgotten the time when he learned this prayer from the lips of his mother, and who ceases to remember, or feel that he is a better and a happier man, when he remembers the hush of peace that came over his spirit, when in childhood he repeated this prayer of prayers ; or the calm and blessed confidence with which he laid his head upon his pillow, after having thus talked with his Heavenly Father. Sweet, hallowed memories are these ; which may not be blotted from the soul without leaving a void, that nothing on earth can fill. The records of eternity alone can tell, how much or how widely the human

soul has beautified; the will has acquired habits of submission—the love has been quickened—confidence and hope inspired, and all pure and holy feelings cherished, by the influence of this beautiful prayer, when offered in singleness of heart, and in conformity with that divine command of the Decalogue, “Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.”

We dwell not however, upon this idea of the unity of God, our main object being to develope that christian view of the Most High, which presents him in the character of our everlasting Father.

We take it for granted, of course, that the title by which the Savior would have us address God in prayer is not a mere unmeaning sound, applied as men's names often are, for the simple purpose of designating the particular being intended. But the title is significant of an idea, and that idea is in perfect harmony with the truth and reality of things. The word Father, involves the thought of a child, and indicates the relation in which the former stands to the latter.

As there can be no father, if there is no child, so there are certain characteristics necessary to make up the idea of a father, because they are always associated with that relationship; and suggested to the mind by the mention of the name. Hence, when on the bended knee of adoration, our Savior teaches us to call God our Father, the inference is fair, that he intended to teach us to look up to our Creator as sustaining that endearing and blessed relationship to his creatures. Such being the fact, it follows that whatever attribute is legitimately included in the idea of a Father, and all of goodness and grace belonging to that relationship, may fairly be ascribed to God. That God is the author of our being, and therefore our Father, in the first and absolute sense, is evident at first thought; but upon this I do not dwell at length. What I am more anxious to impress upon your minds is, the more precious and heart cheering truth, that he is characteristically worthy of the relation; and that he maintains it, not only in fact, but also in all the lovely and blessed

attributes, that cluster around that dear and beloved name. We may therefore, in view of the subject before us, and with much propriety ask, what is a father? And what are the features of character necessarily involved in that relationship?

1. The father loves his children.

We know not, but there may be an exception to this, in a being wearing the human form and absolutely a father, yet destitute of all love for his children; but we are not aware that human nature, corrupt as it is thought to be, has ever furnished an instance of the kind; and we are quite certain, that should such a case occur, the great heart of humanity would revolt at the fact, and pronounce him a monster who might not without sacrilege take upon himself the paternal name. To all intents and purposes, and for all men it is enough to say that a man is a father; you need not add, that he loves his children; that much, the world takes for granted, as a matter of course.

If then God is our Father, that simple fact fully authorises the conclusion, nay,

in itself involves the idea, that he loves us. And thus you perceive a flood of light, breaking in upon man's ignorance of God, from the first word of this remarkable prayer. The mere hint that God sustains the character of a father, is the proclamation of infinite love, and the heavens grow bright, and the divine being is revealed as all glorious and lovely by that single thought.

But there are some peculiarities appertaining to parental love, which are worthy of special notice. The father's love is permanent and enduring. We may not say that it is immutable, for man himself changes and fades as the leaf or flower; so that there is nothing about him to which the attribute of immutability can be ascribed. But thus much we may safely say of this love: it is the most permanent and enduring, and the least liable to change or decay, of anything that pertains to humanity, and approaches more nearly to the divine than any sentiment or passion of earth. It is not a transient feeling drawn out by adventitious circumstances, but it is a deep and pervading sen-

timent, inwrought as it were, in the very texture of our being. It depends not even upon the character of the child, nor upon the fact that the child is lovely, as judged by the ordinary standards of attractiveness, but it is the result of the relationship which subsists between the parent and the child, and changes not while that relationship remains. To all others the child may appear a loathsome thing; and no eye can see in it aught to admire; but the father will love it, and for no other earthly reason that can be discovered, than because it is his child, and he is its father. The child may be ungrateful and wicked, and as he grows in stature, may increase also in moral depravity; nevertheless he is still a child; and parental love will linger around him and cleave to him when all else has forsaken him. It will follow him down into the lowest depths of infamy—it will cling to him and visit him in mercy in the darkness of the felon's cell, and live to weep over his grave when the gibbet or the halter has done its work. And what may be noted as most wonderful is, that it

is equal to any and every emergency, and abounds the more, as it is more severely tried and tested. So true is this, that it has come to be a sort of proverb, that if in a family of children there is a graceless reprobate of a son, who fears not God, and regards not man ; for that child the father will do more, and spend more of labor and substance, than for any other of his children. We may not thence infer that the father loves the vicious more than the virtuous child ; for the truth is only this ; the circumstances call for greater efforts, and give opportunity for higher displays of love in one case, than the other. As when one child is sick, it hath need of care and attention, and that attention will be given to the sick, while those that are well, will be seemingly neglected ; it is not because the father loves the sick child most, but because the necessity of the case calls for more visible manifestations of love ; so in regard to the vicious, if for him the father will do and dare, and toil with sleepless nights and tireless energy ; and pour out his substance, and if need be, his blood like

water ; it is not that he loves him most ; for unto any other child he would do the same under the like circumstances ; but it is because the exigencies of the case demand, that, like the shepherd in the parable, he should leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, to go after the one that was lost. Such is the love of a father. It is permanent and enduring ; it rises higher as it is tested more—it is equal to any emergency, and never faileth.

And so of the love of God as indicated by the fact that he is our Father. It is immutable. God himself never changes ; and his love being an attribute of his nature ; nay, the very essence of his nature ; for “ God is love,” it follows of course that it is in the strictest sense immutable, and can never be turned away. Moreover, like the love of a parent, it has its origin in himself—it is not called into being by circumstances that are ephemeral, but exists as an endless ocean in the bosom of the Eternal. It is not drawn out by anything lovely or truly worthy in his children, except the simple

fact that they are his children ; for God does not love us for what we are ; on the contrary, he loves us for what he himself is ; because he is our Father, and it is his nature to love, for he cannot hate anything he has made. Omnipotent he may be, and doubtless is ; nevertheless, there are some things that he cannot do. He cannot lie, because he is a God of truth. He cannot err, because he is infinitely wise. And by the same rule, he cannot hate his children, because he is their Father, and it is his nature to love. True, his children may be ungrateful and wicked ; they may wander far from him, but that does not alter his relationship to them, or absolve him from the obligation imposed by the eternal principles of his own nature. That poor prodigal, far from his home, clothed in rags, and in the midst of famine and death, and reaching out his lean emaciated hands in vain for bread, was still a child, and of all that family, none needed so much of a father's love. And he had it too ; for the old warm heart of the father still yearned towards his child, and beat high with joy when the wanderer came home. And so of God's

children. If there is one of them who is gone from his home, and wandered in the paths of sin, until he has fell among thieves who have stripped him of the robe of innocence, and left him wounded, naked and dead by the way side ; he is still God's child, and of all God's vast family that poor sufferer needs most of the love of heaven, and the fact that God is his Father, indicates the work of the good Samaritan.

Far be it from us to say that God loves the vicious more than the virtuous ; for his love is impartial as the light of heaven. But we do say that the circumstances of the sinful, call for more, and give opportunity for greater displays of love towards them ; and the fact that God is their Father is good ground for the presumption that his love is equal to the emergency, and able to meet the demand. In perfect accordance with this conclusion, is the truth as testified in the Scriptures, and the fact as it stands recorded in the history of the dealings of God with his children. Plainly and directly to the point does the great Apostle to the Gen-

titles assert the truth of God, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" and most evident it is, upon the very surface of things, that the highest and holiest manifestations of the love of God have been made to sinners; and this too, precisely upon the principle that "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." Not that God loves man the better because he has sinned; but because he loved him notwithstanding his sins; and sin itself furnished the occasion for displays of love that could not have been made, because they would have been unnecessary without it. The giving of the law, the mission of a long line of prophets; the labors, the teachings, and the death of the Savior, and all the glories that cluster around Calvary and its cross, or the tomb of Joseph, and its risen tenant; for all these sin was the occasion; and without sin, so far as these are concerned, the Father's love would have been as it were a reserved power slumbering and at rest; whereas with it, the might of that power has been unfolded, and it has been a living, active energy, working

mightily for human good. Such are a few of the thoughts connected with the love of God, as suggested to the mind by the fact that we are instructed to address him as "Our Father who art in Heaven."

2. The father provides for his children. This is indeed but a manifestation of his love, but it is worthy of a passing notice.

The child is feeble and helpless. The wants of the body clamor with ceaseless importunity for a supply. The intellect craves the light of intelligence and knowledge—the moral nature needs culture, guidance and sustenance, and the whole soul cries aloud for care and support. And to whom shall the helpless child go for provisions for these manifold wants? To whom indeed, but to his father? Accordingly nature itself has planted in the parental heart the impulse, or the instinct, if you please to call it such, which impels us ever to make provisions for our children. These provisions will be adequate and abundant according to the ability of the parent. No father who is worthy of the name will leave his children

to starve when it is in his power to provide them food—to grow up in ignorance, when he has the means to enlighten them, or to fall into sin, when he is able to preserve them in the path of virtue. The limit of the father's provisions for his offspring is his power, and not his love. So if God is our Father, we may feel the blessed assurance that he will provide for all our wants—wants that he has himself impressed upon our nature, and to which we are subjected, not by our own acts or consent, but by his will and pleasure. And from the fact, that he is the source of all power, and has all things at his command, we have a right to presume that his provisions will be ample and abundant; fully adequate to all our wants, and suited to all the vicissitudes, through which he may call us to pass. That God has shown himself a kind and provident Father so far as our physical wants are concerned, is evident at first view. He maketh all things minister to our necessities. Do we need light? Behold, "He maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and hath

lighted up the heavens that we may not wander in darkness." Do we need air? He has poured an atmosphere some fifty miles deep, over the whole surface of the globe. Do we need food? "He has caused the earth to bud and bring forth, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater." "He hath given us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our storehouses with food and our hearts with gladness." Do we need drink? Behold how he brews the crystal element in the depths of the earth, and causes it to gush from a thousand springs, and flow in rivulets, and roll in broad rivers, that man may drink and be satisfied. That the good father has made ample provisions for our temporal wants is therefore evident. Whether he has been equally careful to make adequate provisions for our spiritual necessities, is regarded by some as a question of more doubtful import. I say adequate provisions, because it is not doubted that some provisions of this sort have been made; but that they are adequate to the wants of man, and able to meet the exigencies that will arise,

is not merely doubted, but most positively denied.

It is believed indeed that God has provided a savior even for sinners—a savior both able and willing to save. He has also given to man an agency in the exercise of which he can embrace the Savior, and co-operate with him so as to secure his salvation. All well thus far. But if, as is most commonly believed, it shall turn out in the end, that this stubborn agency shall defeat its object, so that only the spiritual wants of a portion of the race shall be satisfied, in their salvation, while another portion shall die eternally, for want of the bread of life; if, in short, the proposed end is not accomplished, it will be because of some defect in the means; and it is clear as noon day, that the provision was not adequate. A good and provident Father, having all wisdom and power, would have guarded against a contingency that could thus thwart his plans, and render his provisions for his children of no effect. It should be borne in mind, that God is a spirit and the father of the spirits of all flesh; and

inasmuch as it belongs to the parental character to make adequate provisions for his children, to the extent of his power ; we insist, that the fact, that God is our Father, is the proof that his children will be cared for, and their spiritual and eternal interests secured, beyond the probability of any contingency that could result in a failure. And this blessed assurance, this heart-cheering confidence in his ceaseless care, and never failing faithfulness, should be renewed in our hearts whenever, and wherever, we bow before him in prayer and address him as, "Our Father, who art in Heaven."

Consider for one moment how weak and comparatively helpless is man! How beset with temptations, and girt about with evils a numerous host! How fickle his resolutions, and how feeble the pulsations of his heart towards the good and the true! How liable to err when his best judgment is exercised, and how nearly is evil present with him, even when he would do good! How many and strong his earthborn passions which chain him down to the things of time and sense,

and cramp and fetter the spirit in its aspirations to God! Aye, how rash and inconsiderate, how reckless and improvident, and how little to be trusted, even with the management, and disposal of his temporal interests, to say nothing of his immortal destiny! Nay, his father does not leave him to himself in these affairs of minor importance; but through all the labyrinths of time he guides and guards his unsheltered head from danger and harm; and though "Man's heart deviseth his way, yet, the Lord directeth his steps;" and so sleepless is his vigilance in watching over him, that the assurance is, "Not a hair of his head can perish without his father." We say then, that should God leave a being so frail as man, and over whom he watches with such care, to himself, so far as his eternal interests are concerned; or peril those interests on the "hazard of a die" so uncertain as the direction of human agency, or the volitions of the human will, it could no longer be said that he provides for his children, and he would fail in one of the essential, vital

characteristics of a Father. But fear ye not; so long as we have God for our Father, the children may confide in his love, and trust in his care; for "what man among you, being a Father, if his son ask bread will he give him a stone?"

I have extended these remarks to the usual length of a discourse, and yet the subject is not exhausted. It is in truth but just opening upon us. I do not expect to exhaust its mines of wealth; but with your leave I will continue it in another sermon.

SERMON IV.

RECOGNITION OF THE TRUE GOD CONTINUED.

Thou shalt have no other Gods before me.

EXODUS xx. 3.

Our Father which art in Heaven.—MATT. vi. 9.

In our last we treated of the doctrine of God's unity and sovereignty, as taught by Moses in the Decalogue, and recognised by Christ, in the invocation with which the Lord's Prayer commences. We showed that while both the Decalogue and the Prayer acknowledge one only living and true God, the former rested in the assertion of the truth that the Lord is God, and there is none else, while the latter presents him in the character of a Father. We remarked that this name is significant of important truth, and noted at length two things as being involved in and inseparable from the idea of

a father. First, that he loves his children ; and second, that he provides for their wants. The subject is so ample, and of such vast importance, that we shall pursue it further in the present discourse. We resume it therefore where we left it in the previous discourse and remark—

3. The Father exercises authority and government over his children.

He loves them, as we have seen, and of course, is interested in their welfare. He knows their weakness, their frailty, their ignorance, and their liability to err, and understands, distinctly, that they have need of his guidance, and the aid of his wisdom and experience. The counsel, the precept, and the example of a father, are often insufficient to restrain the children's feet from the paths of evil ; and, for this reason it becomes necessary that he should issue his commands, and enforce obedience to them by the bestowments of rewards ; and, if need be, by the infliction of punishment. Thus the best good of the children renders it necessary that the father should exercise

authority and government over them. It should be borne in mind, however, that there is a world-wide difference between the government of a father, and that of a sovereign or a mere ruler whose sole object it is to govern. In this last case, the government is hard and ungracious, and is established, not for the good of its subjects, but for the aggrandizement or gratification of the ruler, and it immolates the dearest interests of the former, on the altar of the pride or cupidity of the latter. It commands because it loves to command, and its laws are founded, not in equity, justice, and mercy, but in the whim, caprice, or despotic will of the law-giver ; and, obedience to them, blesses not the subject, but only serves the interests of the government : for this reason it rewards with partiality and punishes with cruelty, forgetting, always, to mingle justice with clemency, or temper judgment with mercy. Far different from this is the government of a father : it is mild and merciful, and has its foundation in a deep and tender solicitude for his children's welfare. Apart from

the love he bears them, and his strong desire for their good, there is no reason why a father should govern his children, or exercise authority over them. If they could do as well without, as with his direction, he would leave them to themselves. But he knows they cannot, and for this reason he rules them. This then, being the fundamental principle, on which parental government is founded, to it, all the detail is subservient. Its rewards are dictated by love, and seeking, as its first and highest object, the good of the children, that good can never, in any instance, be sacrificed to any thing that may be dignified with the name of justice; because, in that case the government would war with itself and with its own hand, defeat the very object for which it is established. True, the father may punish the child, and for the present, that punishment may be grievous and severe, but faith looks forward to a blessed end—love shines on, and the rainbow of hope is seen in the tear-drop that trembles in the father's eye, as he inflicts the stripes by

which his child must be healed. In no act of his life does a parent give higher evidence of his love for a child than in the fact, that he corrects his faults, and chastens him for his sins. Provided, always, that the punishment is such as to eventuate in good. But the moment the punishment becomes an irreparable injury, or ceases to look to the good of the child, that moment it becomes vindictive, revengeful, tyrannical; and, it passes the line that separates a parental government from one that is absolute, and tyrannical. The application of these views, to the subject in hand, is easy and natural, and its import need not be mistaken. The text gives us the assurance that God is our father. If so, His is the government of a father, and all of truth, that we have predicated of parental government may be attributed to the dominion of God. If, indeed, he is our father, doubtless he exercises the prerogative of a father, in asserting authority and maintaining government over us. But it is the authority and the government of a father, in whom power never degenerates

into tyranny, wisdom into cunning, mercy into weakness, nor justice into cruelty. It seeks our good as its first object, and, if in it God seeks his own glory, it is the glory of a father which shines most brightly in the love, the obedience, and the blessedness of his children. God knows how frail we are, and how, left to ourselves, we should rush on to ruin, and how much we need the guidance of his wisdom, that we may keep the paths of safety. For this reason he gives us his laws and demands our obedience; not that it will benefit him, but that it will bless us. To these laws he annexes the promises of reward and the threatening of punishment. But, his are the rewards and the punishments of a father. The former may be abundant and rich, but they will be given when, and only where, they are merited; and the latter may be sore and dreadful, but they will be richly mingled with mercy, and will never lose sight of the good of those upon whom they are inflicted. Nor is it possible that God himself should punish any human soul, by the infliction of an irrepara-

ble injury, without losing his claim upon the title and character of a father. Thus the Apostle testifies, saying, "He chasteneth us for our profit, that afterwards we may be partakers in his holiness." "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not." "But if ye be without chastening, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons." Thus clear and ample is the testimony, that even the punishments which God sends upon us are inflicted upon purely parental principles, and are the evidence that he is our father, and we are his children; and, "He dealeth with us as sons." Thus, what we have noted as being involved in the fact, that we may call God our father; or, as a plain and fair inference from it, is here most positively asserted. Strange, passing strange is the fact, that the christian world, which in every age has been pleased to address God as a Father, should, nevertheless, have lost sight of the blessed truth indicated by that holy name; a truth, in the light of which

alone, man can kiss the rod that smites him ; and bow with the submission of hope to the corrections of the Almighty, and profit by them, saying, " It is good for me that I have been afflicted," I will bear the stripes, and, " though he slay me yet will I trust in him." Most strange of all is the circumstance, that the fact that he punishes men is taken as the proof that he is not their father, but is in reality the most relentless and formidable enemy of their well being, and will sacrifice their immortal interests upon the altar of a malignant and ruin-working principle which they call justice. God threatens to punish sinners, therefore he is not their father, and they shall never serve and obey him, is the logic of the theology of the past and the present. But the logic of Paul is, " God punishes men, therefore, he is their father—he dealeth with them as sons—the peaceable fruits of righteousness shall be brought forth, and they shall become partakers of his holiness." Such is the difference between the wisdom of the world, and the wisdom that cometh from above. The former sees in

God the stern ruler and king, in whose character and government is centered all that can define the tyrant—in the fact that he punishes his creatures, it reads the proof of his infinite wrath, which seeks, as its end, and will be satisfied with nothing less than the endless ruin of the souls of men. But the other looks up to God and calls 'him father; and in the fact that he punishes, it reads the truth that he is indeed a father, and beholds the evidence of that love which would purge them from all iniquity, and make them the obedient subjects of his heavenly kingdom. Which of the twain is most consonant with the spirit of our text, which bids us bend, in lowly reverence, at the throne of heaven, and call God "our Father," it is not difficult to determine. We therefore sum up what we have said upon our subject, thus far, in a few words. The idea that God is our father, necessarily involves the truth, that he loves his creatures at all times, and under all circumstances, with a love infinite and unchangable as his own nature—that he makes ample, abun-

dant, and adequate provisions for all their wants, temporal and spiritual—that he governs them in authority, and requires obedience of them, and will enforce it upon them, because in it their highest good consists. Such are a few of the prominent and vital truths, suggested to the mind, and clearly taught, in the invocation to God, under the name of “Our father which art in heaven.” There is another blessed truth connected with this text, that must not be passed in silence, and we make it the theme of another division of our subject.

4. If God is our Father, then we are brethren.

We have before said that this prayer is appropriate for all sorts and conditions of men, and we now say, that they may all use it. There is not a human being upon the broad earth who may not pray, or from whom God would withhold the privilege of calling him Father. The duty and the privilege of prayer pertains to man universally. Hence, the Apostle says, “I will that men pray everywhere.” If, then,

all men should pray, and when they pray, say, "Our father which art in heaven," it follows that they are all brethren. This truth is clearly indicated in the words of our text. It is eminently a social prayer. It contemplates not the individual man, as an isolated fragment of creation, having no affinity with others, or interests in common with his fellow men, calling upon God in a spirit of selfishness, and saying, my Father ; but it places him in his true relation, as a member of a great and blessed family, and bids him say, our Father ; thus reminding him that he is not alone ; but, there are brethren around him, to claim his sympathy and love ; and that to them, as well as to him, God is a Father. Brotherhood, human brotherhood, not merely as a theory, but as a positive matter of fact, extending through all the race, uniting all human souls in one common bond of fraternity, and giving to each an interest in the welfare of one and all : this, this is the sacred truth with which we are to commence our appeals to the throne of the Infinite One. Of all truths ever

uttered by mortal tongue, or inspired pen, save only that from which it flows, to-wit, "God is our Father," this is the greatest and the best; the most powerful in its influences upon the human heart; the mightiest, in its control, of human destiny on earth, and the widest in the sphere of duty to which it points. And these two truths conjoined, "God is our Father, and man our brother," correctly understood, duly appreciated, and faithfully applied, constitute about as much as any man need to know, of theology, for all the purposes of life. Of the former I have spoken, and of the latter it remains to dwell more at large. The great and radical defect, in all systems of religion, government, law, and social organization, has ever been, in a practical denial of this "large brotherhood of our race."


The Gods, recognized in the various systems of men, have been the Gods of tribes, and sects, and parties, friendly, it may be, to a few, but the implacable enemies of all save those that worshipped at their shrines, or in their temples. And it has ever been,

like Gods, like people. Brotherhood, after some fashion, they have indeed recognized, so far as a little sect or party extended, but all beyond these narrow lines has been enmity; and those who were without the circle, have been enemies, whom it were lawful to immolate upon the altar of self-interest. And so of government. It commenced with a clan or horde, who joined hands, and admitted the idea of brotherhood so far as their little band was concerned; not however as an absolute and independent fact, but as a matter of conventional agreement, originating in the necessities of the case. They said not, "we are brethren," but we will agree to be brethren, that we may thus augment strength, to secure our safety, or to go out with a superior force, and plunder our fellows. Meantime another band had been formed, on similar ideas, and the two, never dreaming that they were brethren, began to bite and devour each other. The strongest conquered, and others fearing their power, combined for defence or aggression; and thus a nation was born.

But the nations, ignorant that they were brethren, or that there was any tie of interest, uniting them in one family, "let slip the dogs of war," and the earth was filled with violence and blood. And thus it has been from the beginning, so that the history of the world, is all red and dripping with the blood of millions slain. And what is the cause? simply this. Ignorance of the law of human brotherhood, binding, in one bond of union, the interests of all nations of men whom God has made to dwell on all the face of the earth. War's grim legions, all dark and bloody as they have been, have needed but to know the meaning of that word, "Our Father," in order to return the sword to its scabbard, and join their hands in the embrace of brotherhood. And so of human laws; they have, for the most part, been made, not for brethren, but for beings whose rights might be trampled upon, and whose interests might all be sacrificed to build up a throne. Hence penalties have been inflicted, not as upon members of a great brotherhood, but as upon things that might

be crushed and blotted out, without leaving a blank in the family, or disturbing the harmony of God's house. And so of the social fabric in all its aspects. First in the thoughts of men is the idea of self; nor dreams the world, that every man is a part, and a necessary part, in the social fabric; and that there is no such thing as the real interest of an individual, apart from the interests of his race. But each imagining that all his interests are centered in himself, and that he may be supremely blessed, though his fellows are seethed in woe to the very lips; they run with hot haste into the battle, for gain, where keep all you have got, and get all you can, is the rule; and, "no matter who loses so that self wins," is the moral; and the result is, that the shrewd and calculating few, secure the loaves and the fishes, the gold and the silver, the cattle and the herds, the houses and the lands, and hot and bitter is the animosity between the rich and the poor; the latter imagining that they cannot gain without taking, and the former that they cannot give without

losing. Again, we ask, what is the matter ? and, again, we answer, simply this. They do not know that they are brethren. They have not learned the meaning of the prayer they use, saying, "Our Father who art in heaven." Let that much of divine truth dawn upon the darkness of the human mind, and it will be seen, that the good Father, has provided enough for one, and for all, and that no member of his great family, can take what belongs to another without injuring himself and the whole—nor can any part thereof rise to the highest point of prosperity and happiness, while any other part is degraded, poor, vicious, or unhappy. Precisely, here, also, is the radical defect in the popular religion of the day. It rives humanity asunder in the outset—divides the race into two parts, having few interests in common for time, and none at all for eternity—cuts the tie of brotherhood between them, and fraternizing with one party alone, assumes that the one may be supremely blessed in the presence of God, while the other is immortally cursed with devils and



the damned. Let but the truth speak to the understanding and the heart, in that blessed word which saith, "Our Father which art in heaven," and all these visions of a disordered and vindictive imagination will vanish as mist before the rays of the morning sun. Then would it be seen that the thronging myriads, whom superstition so confidently dooms to woe eternal, are God's children, and are brethren; and if from out the darkness of the pit, they should call upon God as their father, his ear would be attentive to their cry, and he that sitteth upon the throne would acknowledge the relationship, and own and bless them as his children. Then, too, would it be seen, that the idea of salvation, and of heaven, where bliss is perfect, for a part, while the other part is enduring anguish, such as no thought can conceive, or tongue express, is impossible; for God has made us brethren, and placed our supreme good in the fact that we dwell together in unity; and in all this boundless universe, there is no heaven, there can be none to the man whose brother is in hell. Go, then,

and learn the meaning of this word; and when thou prayest, saying, "Our Father which art in heaven," ponder well the language of thy lips. Think, oh, think of thy brethren, and pray for them in faith, nothing doubting.

One thought more, and I shall close this part of the subject. It is a pleasing thought, that of all the names and titles, that are given to God in the bible, this name, Father, is the one, selected by our Savior, as the proper one to be used, when we call upon him in prayer. He is called, "Jehovah," the "Lord God," the "Mighty One," the "Lord of Hosts," the "Almighty," and is distinguished by various other titles, indicative of some one or more attributes of his character. But this one embraces them all in one word. He asks us not to stand in the distance, and in words expressive of his majesty and glory, and our own deep sense of his awful majesty, to call upon him as a being who is slow to hear, and pleased with the sound of titles and compliments; but he instructs us to draw near to him in our

hearts, and in childish simplicity and confidence, to run to his ever open arms, and call him our Father. No other name could bring us so near to him, or so move the affections, or stir up the fountains of feeling in the heart. No other name could so strengthen the faith, or enliven the hope, or give such blessed trust to the voice of prayer. Our Father! O, how that word levels the proud distinctions of earth, and brings the vast race into one common family, whose interests, whose hopes, whose inheritance, and whose joys are one, and indissoluble. And what a rebuke to human pride, and human vanity. To the king on the throne it speaks, and as he considers himself a favored and exalted son of God; it bids him remember, that the meanest and the humblest of his subjects, may call the King of kings, and Lord of lords, his Father, and that he will own him as a child. To the rich man rolling in affluence, and clothed in purple and fine linen, and proud of his retinue, and his gilded baubles, it speaks, and bids him be humble at the thought, that

the poor beggar at his gate, may look to heaven with equal confidence, and with equal truth, call God his Father. May its blessed influence go onward, until the proud shall be humbled, and the lowly exalted, and man, everywhere, shall feel that he is the brother of man, for one God is our Father.

SERMON V.

REVERENCE FOR GOD.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy
God in vain. EXODUS xx. 7.

Hallowed be thy name.—MATT. vi. 9.

We notice in the outset of our present discourse, a remarkable consecutiveness which pervades alike the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer. We mean by this, that the several commands and petitions follow each other in regular consecutive order; the one flowing from the other as the next natural step in the scale of progress. Both commence with the recognition of God as one and supreme. The Decalogue announces him as the only proper object of worship; and the Prayer approaches him in the interesting and endearing character of a Father, full of love and kindness to his children. The next step is the most natural imagina-

ble. Moses prohibits all vain and irreverent use of the name of God, and Jesus teaches us to pray that his name may be hallowed in all our thoughts. These are the legitimate fruits of what precedes them. Thus : The man who perceives and distinctly understands that God is in all truth the supreme and only ruler of heaven and earth, will not be likely to trifle with his name, or take it in vain. And the perception of this truth is necessary to obedience to this command. In like manner, the man who sees God as his friend and Father, and appreciates the truth of his parental love, will bow before him with deep and profound reverence, and hallow his name in all the affections of his soul ; and this knowledge of God is necessary to this result. In this light it will be seen, that the subject before us, in its entirety, commences with the first dawn of true religion, in the simple recognition of God, and maps out its progress onward and upward, step by step, until the period of deliverance from the evils that so afflict us at present ; and so accurate is this arrange-

ment, that not one of the steps can be realized until the next preceding one has been taken.

We come now to consider the subject of reverence for God's name, as enjoined negatively in the Decalogue, and positively indicated in its highest sense, in the Prayer. The requirement is, not only that we shall abstain from taking God's name in vain, but that we shall consider it a hallowed and sacred thing.

A thing is hallowed when it is set apart from all secular and profane use, and consecrated solely to the purposes of religion. Thus the vessels and vestments of the Temple were hallowed, in the fact that they were devoted exclusively to the religious rites and ceremonies there performed. The Temple itself was a hallowed spot, because it was consecrated to the worship of God. Most hallowed of all, was the Holiest of Holies, into which none but the High Priest might enter, and he only at stated periods, and for the performance of the most solemn services. The petition under consideration, is an ex-

pression of the desire, that the name of God may be thus set apart from common use, and common discourse, and consecrated only to the purposes of religion. It is understood of course, that this consecration should be made, not as a mere matter of form, fashion or expediency, but from a deep feeling of veneration and reverence to that august being who bears the hallowed name. To the Jews there was one name by which God was known, which was ineffable. Taught by their traditions, they never, on any occasion uttered this dread name. And so even unto this day, in the service of the synagogue, when the reader comes to the name JEHOVAH, he pronounces it not; but utters in its stead, "Adonai;" signifying "Lord." This was perhaps carrying the idea of hallowing God's name to an unnecessary extent; and it is more likely, that this custom proceeded from a love of show and outward appearances, than from a deep and true veneration for God. A refusal to utter the name of God at all, if it be done in sincerity, may indicate dread and awe; but in our view is

not a proper mode of expression of that filial reverence and heart felt veneration which he requires us to exercise towards him. We can conceive of a proper degree of real respect and reverence for God which is not perfectly consistent with the reverential mention of his name. To hallow God's name, is not to refuse to mention it all, but it is to use it only with respect and veneration. But in this liberty to use that name, we should not run into the opposite extreme, of a too frequent employment of it. The name thus becomes common and familiar; and when it comes to be used in ordinary conversation, and upon all occasions, it is easy to see that there is a real lack of reverence for the being to whom it belongs. In this connection, as well as any other, we may offer some remarks upon the prevailing vice of profanity. It is lamentable to look abroad over the enlightened, christian world, and behold how wide, and almost universal, is the prevalence of this sin. We call it a sin, because it is in itself, an effectual barrier to all progress in the divine life, and because it is most strictly

forbidden in the Decalogue, accompanied with the assurance that God himself takes cognizance of it as a crime, and will not hold that man guiltless, who indulges in its practice ; and further, because it is opposed to the very letter and spirit of that prayer which should go up from every human heart saying, unto God, "Hallowed be thy name."

It will be seen before we have done, that it is indeed, of no ordinary magnitude, presenting a sad obstacle to the growth of the religious life in the individual soul, and a formidable barrier to the progress of the kingdom of God on earth. And yet how wide and ruinous its extent! In the hells of depravity, which so mar the face of this otherwise beautiful earth, the name of God may be heard, mingling with the obscene jest, the vulgar joke, the riot of debauchery, and the swagger of intemperance. In the marts of business, it is uttered by thoughtless tongues, amid the chafferings of trade and the bargainings of avarice. Nor there alone ; but in the family and social circle, in the solemn hall of legislation, and in houses

called seats of justice, and in presence of magistrates and judges, in the warehouse and the workshop, yea everywhere, save only in the pulpit, and sometimes even there, the holy name of God is used with lightness and irreverence, which shows that it wakes up no feeling of veneration, and is not associated with the idea of that all gracious and ever present being to whom it belongs. But it is not the less sinful because it is so common. In all its forms and phases, it indicates a soul in which the first step in the religious life has not been taken. It tells of a heart hardened and constantly hardening—a soul that has positively no appreciation of the idea of fealty to God, or duty to him; and which needs but the occasion and the temptation to steep itself in crimes of darker die. Think not that this is the mere cant of the pulpit. It is more than that: it is solemn truth. Look at it but for one moment in a plain common sense view. See you a young man who has a kind and provident father, for whom he entertains not the slightest respect. He mentions his father's name with habitual

lightness and irreverence. He uses that name to give point to every sarcasm, to embellish every joke and witness every oath that he swears in his common, and often meaningless conversation. Need we any other or better proof that there is a radical and fatal defect in that young man's character, a defect that renders him absolutely unworthy of confidence and respect? Need we be told that he is utterly wanting in reverence for his father; or that his wishes or commands have no binding authority upon him? Nay, for that much is apparent upon the very surface of things.

We take it, that by any and every rule of judgment, God is entitled, at the very least, to as much respect as an earthly father; and we say it with the deepest conviction of its truth; the man who uses God's holy name with irreverence, and makes it the epithet and the expletive of every sentence, in his ordinary conversation, is positively wanting in that reverence which is due from the creature to the Creator—that estimate of duty to God which lies at the foundation of all right-

eousness, and from which all human virtue that is worth the name, must proceed. And hence there is a fatal defect in his character, which makes him a man upon whom you cannot safely rely, when the question comes between his interest and his duty. We do not say that such an one must needs be an outbreking offender, or what the world calls decidedly a vicious man, so far as his outward acts are concerned. But we do say that the strongest barriers against the floods of iniquity, are, in his case, broken down; and it will be next to a miracle of heaven's mercy, if he does not wax worse and worse, instead of growing in grace and virtue. He may pass among his fellows for a good man, in the main, having indeed, but one blemish in his character, and that a slight one; but the truth is, it is a worm at the root of the tree, and that tree cannot flourish, until the worm is removed. He may be a good husband and father, for the natural love he bears to his wife and children. He may be a good neighbor and friend, from the native kindness of his

heart. He may be an honest man in his dealings, from a conviction that, in the long run, "honesty is the best policy." He may be a good theologian, from the perceptions of a clear and discriminating intellect, and he may support the institutions of religion from the general idea of their respectability and usefulness—all these things such a man may do, from one cause and another; but the fatal defect is, he will do nothing, because his duty, and only because his duty to God requires it; and, yet, this is the beginning of virtue. How, indeed, can the profane man talk of duty. The admission of that word into his vocabulary is an acknowledgment that there is something due from him to his creator; and if any thing is due surely common civility and decent respect for his name may be reckoned among the debts. But if he refuses to render these; and instead thereof uses God's name in jest and derision, and in associations to which he would not degrade the name of a favorite servant, how dare that man talk of duty. The truth is he knows not the meaning of

that word, and he has not performed it in its first rudiments. Besides all this, the vice now under consideration, is so destitute of an apology, and so utterly inexcusable, that its cause can be found in nothing else than an obliquity of moral vision which will not see the right, or an obtuseness of perception which perceives not or cares not for the difference between the right and the wrong. It therefore indicates a moral depravity deeper and more blameworthy than that which is necessary to account for crimes that rank higher upon the catalogue of iniquity. There is no constitutional infirmity, no hope of gain, no raging thirst or appetite clamoring for satisfaction—no love of honor or praise, unless it be the praise of the vile—no strong temptation of any sort, moving a man to blaspheme the name of God, that may be urged as an extenuation of guilt. But it is the free and unsolicited outgushing of a spirit that loves the wrong for its own sake, and wantonly insults the majesty of heaven, without even the miserable

apology of a provocation thereunto, or a shadow of a reason for so doing. It is said, to be sure as if in the way of an apology, Oh! it is only a habit; a foolish one we grant, but one by which we mean no harm. A habit is it? And an unmeaning one at that! And pray how long did it take you to acquire the habit of insulting your Maker and your God without compunction and remorse? How long were you in learning to take the venerable name of God upon your lips, without meaning anything by it? And what hardening process did you pass through in order to acquire the taste for using God's name in preference to some unmeaning word when you desired to talk without sense or meaning? It would seem that a man of common capacity if he wished to talk nonsense might find words that would answer his purpose better than that sacred name at which Angels bow and Archangels veil their faces and adore. But there is more of meaning in that profanity than you are willing to allow; and it tells a tale that thou shouldst blush to hear. It

speaks of a soul that is a stranger to God and to a sense of duty. It tells of reckless and spontaneous depravity, which without a reason or a cause, trifles with things sacred and divine. It speaks also of dark and dreadful ingratitude which although it stands as an empty handed beggar at the door, and receives its bread from the hand of charity, turns around and insults and sneers at the benefactor, by whom it has been fed and saved from the jaws of famine and death! And worst of all, thou hast done it, not once or twice merely, but hast persisted in it until it has become a habit!! Tis time, high time, that this vile habit were abandoned, once and forever. Our counsel to thee is this day to begin the work of reformation, and bowing, in contrition of spirit, before the oft insulted majesty of heaven and earth, pray unto him saying, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight. Henceforth, hallowed be thy name. Let that name be hallowed in this poor heart that has gone so far from thee. Let it be hallowed upon these lips that have been so

polluted with cursing and blasphemy—let it be hallowed in these thoughts which have so wandered from the way of duty—and let this soul of mine be so purified and refined that thy name shall be hallowed in all its affections, and in all its thoughts, words, and deeds.

Such is the prayer that the individual should make for himself; and until it is so far answered that he has some reverence for God, and at least a tolerable respect for his name, he has not taken a step forward in the divine life; and vain will it be to look to him for the fruits of obedience and righteousness.

But the prayer extends beyond self. It prays that the name of God may be revered, and deeply hallowed in the hearts of men, everywhere; so that, all abroad in the earth, the voice of blasphemy may be succeeded by the words of devotion, and songs of thanksgiving and praise. And above all, that it may be so hallowed, as to lead to filial obedience and heartfelt submission to the laws, the government, and the will of God.

It should be remarked, that the moral government is not arbitrary, regulating only the hands, while the heart is stubborn and rebellious. But it seeks the control of the affections, and asks not a constrained, but a willing obedience. And hence we were right in saying that reverence for God is its starting point, and forms in every soul, the foundation on which all the superstructure of an obedient life must rest. Without this, there can be no true, and heartfelt obedience to God. Well then did the Savior place this petition, "Hallowed be thy name," first upon the catalogue of things that we may ask of God; and well did Moses place it high in the Decalogue; for it is the first movement that the soul must needs make in its upward course. No hope can there be of improvement, true improvement for any man, until he learns to hallow the name and reverence the character of God.

As of individuals, so also of communities, and of the entire race of men. The foundation, the chief corner stone of all healthful progress, must be laid in reverence for the

name and laws of the Creator. The reason is simply this: God is the governor of the universe, and his laws are fixed and unalterable as the decrees of fate. Where he is revered and his laws respected, man will improve and prosper; but where this is not the case, all appearances of improvement are deceptive; and every movement oblique, rather than right onward, towards the high destiny that awaits our race. Man may improve in art, and in science, and what the world calls civilization; but except he improve also in reverence for God, and his laws, art will be an implement of destruction; science will teach man's "hands to war, and his fingers to fight;" and civilization itself, will be the fruitful source of antagonism and endless strife.

We notice here again, that remarkable consecutiveness, which we have briefly named in another place. God is first recognized as the Supreme. All idols are cast away, and he is seen as the only God, the universal Father; and this truth must first be known and acknowledged, ere man will

reverence God, or cease to blaspheme his name. The name of an austere and ungracious despot may indeed be mentioned with fear and trembling, and with all the outward forms of reverence. But like the bended knees and prostrate bodies, before the idol erected upon the plains of Dura, these forms will be heartless and insincere. It is an easy thing for a man to bow down the head like a bulrush, and in the hour of devotion to speak God's name with every appearance of reverence profound, and the moment the back is turned upon the altar and the temple, throw off the mask, and take God's name in vain. Nothing but the conviction that God is in reality the supreme Lord and universal Father, can secure the world from this duplicity and hypocrisy, and insure heartfelt love and reverence for his holy name. Here then we recognise the reason for that dreadful lack of true reverence for God which is so apparent even among those who bear the christian name. They do not half believe that God is the ever present and supreme arbiter of the destinies of all that

live; and then again the truth that God is a Father is overshadowed by the thought that he is a sovereign and a king; and men have sunk the paternal in the judicial character of the Creator. They see him not as parent, but the king—not as the kind father, but as the stern judge, from whose decisions there is no appeal, and on whose arbitrary will hangs the destiny of their souls. They fear his frown, they dread his vengeance, they quail before the merciless threatenings of his wrath—they expect from him greater evils than from any other being in the universe, and for this cause, they curse him in their hearts, and blaspheme his name continually. In vain do you present them with new and more vivid pictures of a God whom they cannot love, and dare not trust. In vain do you roll over their heads the thunders of his wrath, and threaten them with vengeance dire, that knows neither mercy or end. No feeling of veneration can thus be produced, nor can God's name thus be hallowed. But let the light of truth shine in upon the soul—let God's unity and paternity

be so understood that men can appreciate their own words, when they say, "Our Father which art in heaven;" and the result will be, that the spirit shall be filled with heartfelt love and reverence, and God's name shall be hallowed, and no more blasphemed. You perceive then, that the arrangement is not arbitrary. On the contrary, the command to speak God's name only with reverence, flows out naturally from the knowledge of him as supreme; and the prayer that hallows his name in all our thoughts, is the consequence of seeing him clothed in all the beauties of the parental character.

One other view remains to be taken of the subject, briefly, and we shall leave it with you for the present. The command and the prayer are alike prophetic. The first is the announcement of the law of the Creator; and points to the time when the voice of profanity and blasphemy shall no more be heard in the earth; and the other is the utterance of strong faith, that there is a time coming when the name of God shall be hallowed in every human heart, and by

every tongue. And now, unless the immutable law of God fails, and faith proves a delusion, then, there is a period fixed in the counsels of God, when the blasphemer's tongue shall be mute, and all souls whom God has made shall hallow his name. Man universally, shall look up to heaven, and beholding there a God and Father, shall bow before him in lowly reverence, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was and is, and is to come," and "Hallowed be thy name," in all places of thy dominion. Then shall this command of the Decalogue be fulfilled, and this petition of the prayer be answered.

SERMON VI.

SUBMISSION.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.
Exodus xx. 8.

Thy kingdom come.—Matt. vi. 10.

The command for the observance of the Sabbath as a holy day of rest, and that which enjoins six days labor, are intimately connected in the Decalogue, embracing the general subject of labor and rest, the difference being, that one seems to imply merely passive submission, and the other to require active obedience, both being necessary to that step of progress, which advances man from simple reverence, to conformity to the reign of God. In like manner, the corresponding petitions of the Lord's Prayer, are nearly allied, thus: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done." The one indicates a willingness to submit to the reign of God, and the

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other, a desire actively to do his will. Although these clauses in the prayer, as also in the Decalogue, are so intimately related, and might properly be considered together, as forming one link in the chain of progression; yet, inasmuch as they present more matter of reflection, than we shall be able to pass in review in a single discourse, we separate them here, for the sake of convenience, and shall make the first named the principal subject of our present labor.

It is doubtless a law of man's nature, that he must have his season of rest, and his time for communion with God, and the culture of his moral and religious nature. Hence it might be argued with much force, that the command of the Decalogue which requires man to "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," is the announcement of a law which God has impressed upon humanity, and which cannot be disobeyed with impunity. But aside from this, the Sabbath is an emblem of rest and submission; and it is difficult to imagine a better evidence of submission to the author-

ity of God, than is furnished in obedience to this command. To pause in the eager pursuit of gain—to leave the plough in the field, the implements of industry unmoved, and the merchandise in the marts of business, and devote one day in seven, to rest and devotion, and to meditation upon God and his laws, affords good ground for the conclusion that there is a degree of submission to the authority of God, and willingness to be governed by him. And this is the idea presented also, in that clause of the prayer contained in our present text, “Thy kingdom come.” It contemplates the petitioner, as desirous of becoming a citizen, in the kingdom of God, and as being ready, and willing, to submit to all its laws and requirements. In such a frame of mind only, will a man be likely to pray for the coming of that kingdom.

There is a vague idea abroad, that the “kingdom of God,” is something far removed from the earth, and to possess it, man must leave this world and go to another. The text, however, gives us to understand,

that, instead of going to that kingdom, it comes to us, and instead of belonging to another world, it is established on earth. The word "kingdom" does not give the idea of this passage with much precision, and hence, several Commentators prefer the word "reign," and render it thus: "Thy reign come." By the "reign of God," here introduced, we are not to understand his ordinary dominion over the world, and its affairs; but the reference is, to that moral, or spiritual kingdom, which is to supercede, break in pieces and destroy all other kingdoms, and assimilate all things to its own divine nature. There is no truth more often, or more emphatically asserted, in the Scriptures, than that "the Lord reigneth." Through all the ages of past eternity, he has been the ruler, and the only ruler of the universe. Sitting upon the throne in the heaven of heavens; and being himself the Creator of all things, his will is the supreme law, which overshadows and controls all other laws; and his sway, none can dispute, or successfully resist. Thus, it is true, that God reigns, and has ever reigned,

over all principalities and powers, and that "He doeth his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." It should be remembered, however, that it is one thing for God to reign in fact; but for man cheerfully and willingly to submit to that reign, so that his life shall be, as it were, one peaceful Sabbath, holy unto the Lord, is another and a far different thing; and these two should not be confounded. In regard to the reign of God, we offer, therefore, the following considerations.

1. Although it is true, that God positively reigns, yet hitherto, so far as man can see, he has ruled rather by secondary agencies, and by over-ruling, what seem to us antagonistic powers, than by a direct interference in the affairs of the world. There is no doubt that God reigns in the material world; and in all the vast universe, there is not so much as a particle of matter that is not under his control. But it does not hence follow, that he exercises a direct and immediate influence in all the movements of matter. It is evident, on the contrary, that his do-

minion is exerted, through the agency of those physical laws, which he has given to the worlds, and the materials of which they are made. It frequently happens, that, in some province of this domain, these laws clash in their operations; but the Great Lawgiver has subjected the inferior to the superior, so that, the apparent confusion is over-ruled—order and harmony are restored; and it is thus seen, that God reigns, even where there is apparent anarchy. So it has been from the beginning. We may suppose the materials of which the earth was to be made, to be slumbering in one inert, shapeless, and chaotic mass before him. So saith the sacred penman, “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” “And God said, let there be light, and there was light.” His spirit moved upon chaos; and you have only to suppose, that he then infused into matter, the laws of attraction, and repulsion, of affinity and cohesion; in order to see that, apparent anarchy, and inextricable confusion would be the result,

for a season. Obedient to the heaven-made laws, the myriad atoms of that shapeless mass, would rush, each towards its proper place. What clashing of atom against atom, and mass against mass! What explosions of gasses, and scattering of fragments! What rushing of mighty waters, and raging of devouring flames! What yawning of deep chasms, and upheaving of mountains! What ebbing and flowing of tides, and submerging of incipient islands and continents, must ensue! Could we look upon such a scene, with our circumscribed vision, we should say, that chaos was running mad, and the elements all in lawless riot—that there was neither order nor government; but that, confusion itself was confounded. And yet, it was out of confusion such as this, that this beautiful world was born; and thus, old nature with labor and pain, brought forth her child.

Now it is true, that in the midst of all this apparent discord, and through all this epoch of transition from chaos to organization, God reigned. The elements, the winds

and waves, the land and the sea obeyed his behest; and by the agency of the laws, which he had given them, rather than by a direct application of his own power, he was preparing a habitation for man. During that period, however, "clouds and darkness were round about the throne," and though the truth is most unquestionable, that God then ruled, yet, we would hardly point to that epoch of transition, and signalize it as the period of the reign of God. Rather would we wait, until we saw the order and harmony manifested. And when the waters were gathered together, in the bosom of the sea, and the dry land appeared—the mists went up and the green herb and grass sprang into life—when the earth rolled upon her axis, and took her station in her orbit, to pursue her journey round the sun—when a repose came upon the elements, and day and night succeeded each other with undeviating regularity—to that time would we point and say, now has the Sabbath of his rest arrived. The material world has submitted to his laws; God's kingdom has

come, and his reign over the physical universe has commenced. But if there should remain conflicts of the elements, and commotions of matter—if poisonous reptiles, and ferocious beasts, should infest the earth—if noxious vapors, and pestilential miasma should go up and vitiate the air—if hosts of diseases should invade, and famines and pestilences prevail—if earthquakes should shake the foundations of the world, and tempests sweep the land and the sea, with the besom of destruction; a true faith and a correct philosophy, will admit, nevertheless, that God reigns; but it will not signalize even this epoch as the period of the most perfect manifestation of the reign of God. But it will see here the evidence, that the earth is not yet finished and furnished—but that, changes are yet to be wrought, which shall make it a habitation meet for God himself, who has promised that he will dwell with men on earth, and “will be their God, and they shall be his people.” Then a perfect equilibrium between all the forces of nature shall be established—all the

laws of the universe shall act in harmony—the physical and organic laws, on which life and health depend, shall be obeyed—famines and pestilences shall cease—the inhabitants of the world shall “no more say I am sick”—“no lion nor ravenous beast shall be there;” and in all God’s universe there shall be nothing to “hurt or destroy.” If such a period as this is ordained in the counsels of God, to that may we point, as emphatically the era of his reign, in the highest sense; and so far as the material world is concerned, in reference to it we may say in a still more exalted sense, God’s “kingdom has come.”

I have introduced this view of the reign of God, in and over the physical universe, as an illustration, calculated to lead your minds to a perception of the truth, in that still higher aspect of God’s reign, which remains to be considered.

Begin, then, with the idea, that the materials of which God would build his glorious spiritual temple, were in chaos. Man’s affections, and moral and spiritual powers,

were undeveloped. No law had yet been given to man. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." Not by an instantaneous fiat of power, or flood of light, did God choose to enlighten this darkness, and mould this shapeless mass, into beauty and order. His law was his agent; and the introduction of this law into the moral world, must inevitably produce commotion, like that which followed the establishment of the physical laws. It was the epoch of transition, from chaos to order, in the moral world. Interest must of necessity clash with interest—feelings with feelings—passions with passions—and prejudices with prejudices. The spirit must war against the flesh—and the flesh against the spirit. Wrath and strife must be stirred up, that they may be subdued, and plucked up. The moral and the spiritual, must struggle for that ascendancy which the carnal claims—the heavenly must battle for the victory over the earthly. Love must contend against hate—faith against unbelief, and hope against despair; and long ages

of subversion and apparent discord must ensue, ere the spiritual, shall have gained its perfect ascendancy—the forces of the moral world shall all have settled down in equilibrium, and harmonious action, and good shall have triumphed over evil.

During these ages of confusion, however, it is true, that God reigns; but rather by secondary agencies, and by overruling adverse powers, than by a direct agency. Wind, fire and hail; famine, pestilence and the sword; war, oppression and tyranny, are often his ministers, and the instruments by which he scourges the nations—subdues their boisterous passions—tames the ferocity of the savage, and trains man up for a higher and better life—punishing him for the abuse of the dominion given him over the earth, and leading him on to a perception of his duty, and his destiny. It is from out the womb of chaos such as this, that the “new heavens and the new earth,” must be born; and by conflicts such as these, the moral and spiritual nature of man must be developed, and led on to victory;

and thus the reign of God consummated. Though God rules in all these conflicts, and overrules them all for good, yet we would hardly signalize this, as the period of the "reign of God." Rather, would we wait, at least, until we see the "beginning of the end;" when no opposing forces shall hinder the free operation of the moral law in the human soul—when the moral shall be exalted above the physical, or the intellectual; and the spiritual above the earthly—when the sweet influences of divine love shall take the place of brute force, and of the secondary agencies by which God must needs govern, during the epoch of transition—when discord and strife shall cease, war and commotion shall end—social order and equal justice shall prevail—when one law shall bind all nations, and that shall be the law of love—then shall God's kingdom come, for God is love, and where love reigns God himself reigns. This, this is the kingdom, of which the Sabbath is the emblem, and for the coming of which our Savior bids us pray; and pray in faith, believing there

is a period fixed in the plans of God when it will so come. The time of the coming of this kingdom is not instantaneous. But long ages must intervene between its advent and its consummation. It begun with Moses and the prophets, and its laws, and the means of its accomplishment were perfected in Christ. When in any individual soul, the spiritual shall have subdued the carnal, and the moral obtained the ascendancy over the animal, so that it moves in obedience to the law of love; to that soul, God's kingdom has come, and in it, God's reign is established. And when this work becomes universal, as it surely will be, then shall the reign of God come in deed, and in truth. Then,

"No sigh, no murmur, the wide world shall hear,
From every face he wipes off every tear.
In adamant chains shall death be bound,
And Hell's grim tyrant feel the eternal wound."

It is easy to perceive, that after the knowledge of God, and reverence for his name, the next step towards this work, is submission

to God. This submission may be wrought, by suffering and pain, and sorrow and crying, and the countless forms of evil that abound, but wrought it must be, ere the consummation can be realized, and hence the necessity that we "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy," and train our spirits continually, to the spirit of that prayer, which ardently prays for the coming of the reign of God, and cries unto him, saying, "thy kingdom come." We remark,

2. Humanity in the aggregate, has been and still is, in its infancy or youth, and must of necessity be gradually prepared, for a citizen of God's kingdom, in its higher aspect.

Progress is the universal law to which God has subjected all things; and to this law, man is not an exception. Nothing is made perfect, for in that case, it must have been stationary; but onward and upward everything is moving. It is a blessed boon, that it is so, in man's case; for it were better to be made a worm, with the privilege of endless progression, than an archangel,

fixed immovably in one spot. Because, between that worm, and that angel, there is not a grade or degree of blessedness, or joy, that shall not be realized, nor a lesson of experience that shall not be learned ; and in the revolution of the ages of eternity, there shall come a time, when man shall be as far in advance of that burning seraph, as he is in advance of the glow worm, that shines in our evening pathway. But passing this. Man was, at first, an infant, and God placed him in the school of an infant. He knew not God, or his law, and bowed before Gods many and Lords many. To have attempted then, to teach him the sublime mysteries of God's spiritual kingdom, would have been like placing an infant in college, and essaying to teach him the higher branches of mathematics, ere yet he had learned to lisp his A, B, C, or count the fingers upon his hands. The first step, that could be taken, towards bringing him into God's kingdom, was to teach him, that "the Lord was God and besides him there was none else." And this was the first lesson that Moses

taught. This was taught too, in the simplest form, and by the only means, that the child could understand. It was taught by the most grand, sublime, and sometimes awful, displays of Almighty power. If these manifestations are not marked with the impress of the higher and milder attributes of God—if we see in them, not even justice, or mercy, the reason is, that the time had not yet come for the exhibition of these characteristics of the reign of God, simply because humanity was not yet, prepared to appreciate them. Hence the reason, and the only reason, given for these displays of matchless power is, the oft repeated one, “that the people may know, that I am God, and hearken unto my voice.” Thus came the reign of God in its simplest rudiments, its object being thus far submission to the authority of the most High, indicated prominently in the command to “remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy,” and expressed in the prayer, “thy kingdom come.”

As man advanced, more of the principles of this kingdom were made manifest. The

law was further made known, in which the reign of God is presented, as one of retributive and distributive justice, and mercy gleams out, in the pardon of the penitent though not without burnt offerings and sacrifices. Still, the idea of power was kept prominent, and hence the law was given, amid the thunders and lightnings of Sinai, and the sublimity of the tempest, fire and smoke, which made the people quake, and even Moses himself tremble with fear. As time passed on, and humanity advanced, there came further developments of the reign of God, and the principles of his government, and through the agency of teachers and prophets, God moved upon the hearts of the people, and brought them up, to a perception of the truth, that he was the good and gracious Sovereign. Meantime violence and war abounded, and government was founded in brute force, and controversies were decided by the sword, and might was substituted for right. It was true, that God reigned then, as he ever reigns; but it was also true, that he reigned rather by causing

the wrath of man to praise him, than by quenching the fire of wrath in the heart. Though this dispensation was called "the kingdom of God," and though, in it, as much of God and his government, was manifested, as man was able to comprehend, still, there was reason to pray, saying, "Thy kingdom come," because it had appeared only in the dawnings of its light and life.

In due time Christ appeared, and the "kingdom of God" came in newness of life, and all its principles were unfolded. God was no longer the mere sovereign, but the Father; and his reign that of a parent. All the laws of his government were embraced in one law, even the law of love; and all human duty fulfilled in one word, even this, "thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This dispensation is called, often in the new Testament, "the kingdom of God," and it came down to earth, when the Savior made his advent. But, to the soul of each man this reign of God comes, only when he submits to it, as his law and directory. In some, yea, in many souls, we trust in every

age, since the coming of Christ, this "reign of God" has been established; and submission to it, has followed the perception of its truth and reality. Nevertheless, the masses of men are not yet, prepared to receive it; and must therefore go through more of discipline, and instruction, ere they will submit to this holy and peaceful reign, and yield themselves up, to the guidance of this "perfect law of liberty." And as for the best of us, we have scarce begun to comprehend the glories, and excellencies of this kingdom, nor feel a tithe of the influences, of the reign of God in our hearts. So, that, for ourselves, and for the multitudes who are yet in darkness, there is still need, that we should pray, saying, "Thy kingdom come;" nor may that prayer cease to be offered till the last spot of darkness shall be enlightened—until all thrones and dominions, and every high thing, that exalteth itself against God, shall be brought low, and the last rebellious spirit shall bow down in humble submission to that high and glorious "reign of God," whose beginning and whose end is

love. This, then, we take to be the meaning of the prayer of the text. Lord ! let thy kingdom come. Let the reign of violence cease. Let the dominion of brute force pass away. Let the usurpation of fear and dread, be known no more. Let the kingdoms of this world, and all its thrones and powers, submit to the kingdom of God. Let the reign of heaven's love overshadow every human heart, and the law of love supercede, and swallow up, all other laws, and every soul, that God has made submit to his hallowed reign. Thus much of the text considered as a prayer. But it is more than a prayer. It is a word of prophecy. The Savior teaches us to offer it, at the throne of God, in faith. That faith is no delusion, and hence, as a teacher sent from God, he here teaches us, that God's kingdom shall come, and all the glorious results that we have contemplated, as flowing from the perfect reign of God, on earth, shall be realized. Rebellion shall cease, transgression shall end, sin shall be finished, violence shall no more be heard in all the earth—powers, that have scourged

the nations, shall be brought low—the blood of martyrs shall no longer flow, and “there shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things shall have passed away.” And so also of this command of the Decalogue. It indicates submission to the government of God, and that Sabbath is the emblem of that era of peaceful rest which remains for God’s weary children. So then, the fulfillment of that law in its spirit, leads us to contemplate the time when the worn and the weary of the earth rest from their labors, and the wide world shall enjoy one boundless Sabbath of bliss in the presence of God. Unless this law fails, that result is sure to come to pass. Mark again, the peculiar consecutiveness and natural order in which the subject is presented, in the Decalogue, and in the prayer. Idolatry is prohibited, and God is announced as one and supreme in being, and a Father in character. Next, reverence is inculcated in the prohibition against taking his name in vain; and in the prayer that his name may be hallowed. The next thing required, is

submission to God's reign; and who does not see that this is the natural result of true reverence? Who is not aware, that there can be no such thing as true and heartfelt submission, where there is no reverence? The knees may indeed bend and the tongue confess, but the heart will not be there, and it is the dominion of the heart that God requires. But so soon as that law is fulfilled which prohibits the taking of God's name in vain; and that prayer is answered, which says, "Hallowed be thy name" then submission follows of course. And thus the subject rises before us by a perfectly natural process. We first know God, then reverence his name, and then submit to his reign. And so our great race must be led on step by step, each bringing us one period onward towards that time when the myriads of earth shall bow before the throne, and give God all the glory and praise of human redemption.

SERMON VII.

ACTIVE OBEDIENCE.

Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work.

Exodus, xx. 9.

Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

Matt. vi. 10.

Nothing is more evident than the truth, that both the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer, have mainly reference to the affairs of this present state of being. The command above quoted, relates to man's duty here; and the prayer is, not that God's will may be done in some distant world, but here on earth. With them, this world was not abandoned to hopeless discord and confusion, or to perpetual and everlasting rebellion against God. The one insisted upon the application of God's law to the every day business of life; and the other saw by faith, and announced in the form of prayer, the period when God's will

which ever brings order out of apparent confusion, and good out of evil, should prevail against all opposing forces, and be recognized as the supreme, and ever active law. Moses announces it as the law of man's being, that man should be active, industrious, and prompt in the discharge of duty. Christ teaches us to pray, that this law may be so fulfilled that, all over the earth, man shall be actively engaged in doing the will of God. It may not be amiss to say here, in passing, that Moses, in the command before us, alludes specifically to obedience to the will of God, in the matter of labor. It is presumed that few need be told, that God did not place man on earth to be idle, but gave him a work to perform. He so formed man's body, that its powers cannot be developed, or even its form brought out in symmetry and due proportion, without active exertion. Moreover, he has surrounded us with circumstances that require daily toil at our hands. He has made many of the most valuable blessings of life dependent upon our labor, and gives

them to us only as its reward. Here, then, are the facts, which authorize the conclusion, that when Moses commands us to labor six days out of seven, he gives utterance to an unalterable law of man's being, and indicates the divine will, without conformity to which, man cannot secure the valuable ends of life. Jesus doubtless carried the subject further, and embraced in the petition the will of God, in reference to all man's active duties.

There has been much controversy, in the christian church, upon the subject of the will of God. It has been maintained, by some, that God has given to man an agency, which is essentially free; and, that, so far as that agency is concerned, his will is to be regarded as merely preceptive, not absolute. Thus man is left free to obey, or disobey the divine will, as led by his own volitions, and he has ever done, and still continues to do, many things, in direct violation of the will of God. This is thought to be the only view of the divine government, in which a moral quality can be attributed to human conduct, or a distinction made, between

virtue and vice. Others have contended, that God is the sovereign ruler of the Universe whose will is the absolute law ; and the only law, by which all things are controlled. By the unchangeable counsels of this will, God "foreordained, all things; whatsoever that come to pass;" and neither men, or angels, can do anything contrary to the will of the Almighty. These, however, make a distinction between what they call the "secret" and the "revealed" will of God. The latter is preceptive, and may be disregarded, but the former is absolute, and cannot be resisted. They admit, also, that man is a "free agent," and although they confess, that they cannot perceive, or explain, the harmony between the "divine sovereignty" and "free agency;" yet, they maintain, that such harmony must exist, because both doctrines are clearly revealed in the word of God, and must be, therefore, true. It is not our purpose to engage in this controversy, on either side ; for it seems to us, that there is something of truth, and something of error, in the views of both parties. That God is

the sovereign ruler of the Universe, whose will is before all, and above all other laws, we hold to be central truth. That there is a sense, in which this will is always done, by all beings, and at all times, we cannot doubt, without taking the reins of government out of his hands and making him less than a God. Nevertheless, it is worthy of being noted, that constrained obedience to a resistless law, and cheerful and active labor to conform to the known will of God, are widely different in character. The former is the result of necessity; the latter of free choice, and it is obvious that God's will may be done in one of these senses while it is not done in the other. In attempting to elucidate a subject, which is admitted to be not without its difficulties, what we most need is, to heed the wise counsel so beautifully expressed by the poet,

“ Know then this truth, the first Almighty cause
Acts, not by partial, but by general laws.”

God's government is not fragmentary. It is no little province here, and a domain

there, that he rules by special and specific laws made for the occasion, and to suit the circumstances. But, the boundless universe is his empire, and his laws extend from its centre to its circumference—his will regards alike, the lowest earth and the highest heaven. If the application of his all pervading laws, to circumstances, so diverse, and in dominions so remote, should be attended with commotions, and even apparently opposite movements, or inverted action, it is not, therefore, to be concluded, that God's will is frustrated, or that it has failed of its fulfilment. Rather, is it the proof, that it is active, and accomplishing its ends. In the material world, the laws of nature are but the expressions of the Creator's will. But it often happens, that the dark storm frowns upon the face of the skies; the loosened winds roar in the forest, and the tall cedar and the mighty oak are prostrated by the furious blast. The red glare of the lightning illumines the darkness, and the jar of the thunder starts the beast from his lair, and man from his repose. The elements are in

commotion, and nature seems running riot, in confusion, without law or government. But what then? Are nature's laws violated; and the will of God, as expressed in them, set at nought? Most certainly not, and it is only a partial fragmentary view, which thinks to "comprehend a heaven" by "inspecting a mite;" that dreams of there being any subversion of the principles of the government of God, in that storm. Far up, above those clouds, the sun shines as ever. The planets move in their courses—the earth rolls upon her axis, and is not jostled by the breadth of a single hair, from her orbit; and even in the din of the storm, and the rushing whirl of the tempest, there is not so much as a lawless particle of matter; but the small dust driven by the wind, and the dense clouds, sailing like huge mountains through the air, were alike obedient to the laws by which God has bound them, and which are the best expositors of his will. All this apparent confusion, is the result of general laws, operating everywhere, and producing discord, only to es-

tablished harmony. It was the movement of the hidden forces of nature towards that equilibrium, which was for the moment disturbed in a little spot of earth, thus asserting their power, and establishing harmony, by means of discord. So then the violence of the storm, instead of proving that there is no law, is in fact, the result of the application of law; for if there had been no laws of nature, there would have been no storm; and if one of those laws had been abrogated, or violated, the result would have been, we know not what. But the laws were there, asserting their supremacy, and they could not be broken, and therefore, it was, the storm was laid. The sun shone bright again, and the earth smiled in its beauty, as it did before the clouds gathered in the skies. And to the mind that takes a comprehensive view of the subject, not in detail, but in its entirety, it is evident, that the will of the Creator was as truly done, in that storm, as in the genial sunshine that followed.

Consider again, that, the will of God not only regards all parts of his wide empire,

but it also stretches backward and forward, through all past time and future eternity. Having the countless and illimitable ages of an exhaustless eternity before him, he has no need to be in haste in consummating his plans. If therefore it is announced to be the will of God, that a given result shall be realized, it does not necessarily follow that it is his will that it shall be consummated to-day, or in this century. It was the will of God that the earth should be created, and fitted for a habitation for man; but how long it slumbered in chaos, ere the epoch of creation began, the infinite mind only knows. It was his will, that man should dwell upon the earth; but what ages passed between the morning of creation and the time when the earth was prepared to receive its tenant none can tell. Thus much we may know. When God by the energies of his will moved upon the dark waters, then apparent confusion began. The movement towards order was the occasion of disorder for a time—the assertion of law was the signal for conflict—and the establishment of harmony was the

cause of discord, for a season. Nevertheless God's will was supreme ; and it was done not less in the means than in the end. Hence we say, that although it may be God's will, that a given event shall be realized, yet for ages a state of things may exist utterly at variance with the contemplated end, and that too in perfect accordance with the divine will. It is enough, that the movement is onward towards the contemplated end — enough, that the laws of nature indicate the ultimate will ; so that the end is attained, that will is supreme, and has not been violated. You have only to apply the principles thus indicated to the moral world, in order to perceive how it is, that God reigns supreme, and how his will is done amid all the turmoil and confusion, the sin, sorrow and suffering, the wrath and strife of the world. In the moral and spiritual, not less than in the material universe, God acts, not by partial, but by general laws. His will regards, not a part, but the whole ; and is the immutable and omnipotent fiat, that binds alike the humblest child of earth,

and the highest angel in heaven, and extends to all means and all ends. His laws are an expression of his will, not fragmentarily, but universally. The application of these laws, to the inhabitants of this "dim orb," to creatures of flesh and blood, must necessarily produce conflict, in which, now the flesh, and now the spirit, will apparently prevail. That conflict may be long, and often to human vision, appear to be doubtful. But it is the operation of a universal law; and because it is resisted in a remote province, it does not thence follow, that God has yielded up the reins of government, or abdicated the throne; or that his will is frustrated. Consider again, that the government of God is progressive; and that a long eternity is before him, in which to develop its principles and establish all its harmonies. He need not therefore be in haste, nor rush on from the beginning to the end. To evolve the spiritual from the earthly—the moral from the carnal, and to bring man up, from a creature of flesh and blood, to a being allied to angels, and yielding an implicit

and spontaneous obedience to the higher developements of moral law, was no more the work of a moment, than the creation of the world, and the establishment of all the harmonies of the material universe. The will of God sweeps the whole circle of human existence; and while it provides that the end shall be realized, it does not require that it shall be accomplished in a day, or an age. Periods of apparent discord, epochs of subversion, ages of strife and sin, may intervene between the beginning and the end. And yet, that infinite will of God, which embraces both the means and the end, may not be frustrated, but may be done as truly in the one as the other. Thus, without meddling with the "vexed question" of human agency, which, however free it may be, is a creation of God, and can be no more, or less, than an instrument in his hand, we are compelled to adopt the conclusion, that amid all the turmoil of the world, and spite of all the powers of earth, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth," and his will is the law that knows no abatement;

the rule by which all things must walk without an hair's breadth of deviation. Why, then, are we taught to pray, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven?" Is not the bare fact, that we are required to pray, that God's will may be done, proof that it is not now done? The answer is as follows. The prayer regards, not the past, or the present alone, but the future also. Though it were true that in all time past, from the very beginning, up to the present instant, God's will had been perfectly done, in all things, yet, that would be no reason why we should not pray saying, "Thy will be done." The boundless future is before us, and through all its countless ages, sweeps the will of God. If his will has hitherto been done, still it is not all done. Before us, there are plans of mercy to be accomplished, wonders of grace to be unfolded—inexhaustible treasures of love to be opened, and all these, are dependent upon the will of God. Well, therefore, may we pray, saying "thy will be done." And if we believe, that hitherto, God's will has been done, that conviction

will give faith to the voice of prayer, and enable us, yet more fervently, and confidently to look up to heaven, and pray "Father thy will be done." But another view must be taken. Although it is true, that there is a sense in which God's will has been, and is, done, on earth, yet, it has not been done as it is in heaven, and this is the burden of the prayer. On earth, the will of God is done, in the midst of confusion and discord—done amid antagonistic influences, and opposing forces—done in opposition to the strugglings of man's will, and the perverseness of man's carnal nature—done in spite of man's ignorance, and the workings of his turbulent passions, and often by turning his counsels to nought, and overruling his evil for good. Nevertheless it is done; but not, as it is in heaven. There the battle is fought, and the victory won—there lives the harmony, that has been evolved from discord, the order that has grown up out of confusion—the spiritual, that has succeeded the temporal—the light, that has scattered all darkness—the truth, that has

triumphed over error—the virtue, that has overcome all vice—the love, that has annihilated all hate—the charity, that has survived both faith and hope; and not of constraint, but with willing minds, and cheerful spirits, do the inhabitants of that upper and better sanctuary, obey the behest, and do the will of Him that sitteth on the throne. So the will of God is done, in heaven; and so, the text teaches us to pray, that it may be done on earth. Prophetically, it teaches us to look forward with cheerful hope, to the destiny of man on earth; and anticipate that blessed era, for which kings and prophets waited and sought, but never found, when the good shall have triumphed over the evil in men's hearts, and lives; when the will of God, as indicated in his laws, physical, organic, social and moral, shall be understood and cheerfully obeyed, and “earth shall be paradise again.” The same divine and infallible teacher, who has prescribed the prayer, has authorized also the faith, without which, the prayer would be but solemn mockery.

Thus much we have said of the general principles, indicated in the subject in hand. Specifically, we have seen that the Decalogue enjoins obedience to the will of God, in the matter of daily labor. This is a matter of more importance, than is usually attached to it. Man has a great work to do on earth. He was commanded in the beginning, to have dominion over the earth and subdue it ; and this can only be done by labor. He has, therefore no time to be idle, and there is no place on earth for drones. If therefore, Moses announces the true law of God, in the command to labor, then the command may be taken as the highest prophecy, that the destiny of man on earth, will be achieved. The rugged earth shall be subdued by the hand of labor. The stores for the supply of man's necessities shall augment—each man shall perform the work allotted to him by the will of God, and occupy his true position in the great field of labor—abundance shall teem in every valley, mountain and glen, and want shall be known no more. And this is

as certain to come, as that God's law fails not.

We must not fail to notice, before we close, that remarkable consecutiveness to which we have more than once alluded. The preceeding step was submission, expressed in the Decalogue, in the command, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and in the prayer, thus, "Thy kingdom come." Next, we have active obedience, enjoined by Moses, in the command "six days shalt thou labor;" and prayed for by Christ, in the petition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." None can fail of perceiving, that one of these depends upon the other, and proceeds naturally from it. There is no active obedience, where there is not first, submission; and so soon as man submits to the government of God, he commences to obey his will; and both of these flow naturally from the knowledge of God, and deep reverence for his name. We have then, first the recognition of God, then reverence, then submission, and then follow the toil, the

active effort, the obedience by which the great result is to be brought about.

I note here as truly wonderful, the fact that while all admit that this command is the law of God, and all consider the prayer as proper and appropriate, few believe that the law will be fulfilled, or the prayer answered. The faith of the church, even, has long since abandoned this earth to hopeless rebellion against God; and though a vague hint at the truth, may be occasionally thrown out, under the idea of a "Millenium," yet few seem to regard it as a substantial reality, or to appreciate the high and glorious destiny of man on earth. But while the law is acknowledged, and this prayer goes up from ten thousand altars, and is repeated by twice ten thousand voices, saying, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven," still, the belief is, that this world is too bad to be redeemed, and man must get out of it before he can do the will of God, or obey his law. Hence the effort is, not to "prepare the way of the Lord and make straight in this desert a highway for our God"—not to roll on the

era, when the "glory of the God shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together," but to prepare for another world, and leave the earth to fester in sin, and seethe in guilt and iniquity, abandoned of God, and given over to Satan. This is the infidelity that we most fear; an infidelity that kneels at the altar, and robs prayer of its faith, and hope of its promise; and thus paralyses the arm that would toil for the good of humanity on earth. God speed the time when the law shall be fulfilled, and his children shall lift up their voices and their hearts together unto him, and pray, in the triumphs of an undoubting faith, "Lord let thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven." Then shall our race engage with zeal and alacrity, in doing the divine will. Love to God and man shall then be the motive, and the rule; and there shall be no strife, unless it be upon the question, who shall most perfectly fulfil all duty; and humanity itself shall say, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of God, in earth as it is in heaven."

SERMON VIII.

DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE.

Honor thy Father and thy Mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. EXODUS xx. 12.

Give us this day our daily bread.—MATT. vi. 11.

At first view it may seem, that there is little analogy between the command of the Decalogue, and the petition of the prayer, which we have thus brought together. Further reflection, however, may show that they embrace a similar radical idea, and differ more in form than in spirit. In this case as in some others which we have noticed, Moses does not give us the principle in the abstract, and in the extent of its application; but he presents some one act, in which the principle is exhibited or opposed, and this he commands or prohibits, as the case may be. Thus we look upon the command before us, standing forth as the representative of a

great principle. To honor a father and mother, we take to be the first rudiment of that distributive justice which takes cognizance of the rights of others, and renders unto all that which is properly their due. The man who violates that command, does violence to the very first principle of justice. Moreover, it is here associated with long life and temporal good. In the Decalogue as recorded in Deuteronomy it reads, "That it may go well with thee in the land." Thus, then the matter presents itself to our view. "Honor thy father and thy mother," and thus manifest your attachment to that justice which has a sacred regard to the rights of others, and renders honor to whom honor, and blessing to whom blessing is due. By this means you shall secure good; your days shall be prolonged, and it shall go well with you in the land. This is called the first command with promise; and it is worthy of note, that the promise has reference to long life and temporal prosperity. Quite conformable to this, is the petition of the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread." There

has been some difference of opinion among Commentators in regard to the meaning of this phrase "daily bread." The prevailing opinion, and what we regard as the correct one is, that it includes not merely bread, but all things necessary for the sustenance and comfort of the body; in the enjoyment of which, it may be said of a man in the language of Moses, "his days shall be prolonged, and it shall go well with him in the land." When it is considered further, that a full share of destitution of daily bread and temporal good, flows from a disregard of the principles of distributive justice, and from the fact that man tramples upon the rights of his fellow man; it will appear that when the Savior teaches us to pray for daily bread, he is not far from invoking the application of that same distributive justice, which Moses commanded in the Decalogue, which begins in rendering the honor due to a father and mother, and ends, as we shall soon see, in ample provisions for the temporal wants of our entire race.

For some ages past, there has been

abroad in the world, a philosophy, which teaches that all matter is essentially evil. Human bodies, being made of matter, have been denounced as evil, in all their elements and tendencies; and therefore, unworthy of care, or a serious thought. On the contrary, they must be mortified, if not absolutely lacerated; and always treated as the enemy of the soul, for whose benefit no prayer should be made, no pious thought indulged. The remnants of this old philosophy remain in the theology of the present day, so that, all abroad in the christian world, it is thought that, neglect of the body and its wants is praiseworthy; and that, the good of the soul, is promoted by afflicting the body; and the best title to a heaven, for the former, in another world, is, to make a hell of the present, so far as the latter is concerned. It is evident that neither Jesus nor Moses considered this frail body as a thing to be despised, nor deem it a duty to neglect, or fail to satisfy its wants. One commands us to labor, and the other teaches us to pray in reference to it; enjoining it

upon his disciples to pray for a supply of their bodily necessities, saying, "Give us this day our daily bread."

There is, however, an extreme, in the opposite direction, which should be guarded against, with equal caution. We allude to the idea, so widely prevalent, in practice, that this body is the man, and, that its wants are the great and paramount interests to be looked after. Many indeed, there are, who so far as their actions are to be regarded, as the exponents of their sentiments, may be presumed to believe, that the body is of more worth than the soul; and that the chief, if not the only business, they have on earth, is to provide for their temporal wants; and pamper, and adorn this tabernacle of flesh, even at the expense of the culture and discipline of the spirit. Hence, the endless strivings for wealth and luxury, and the restless and eager toil of the "thoughtless mass," who, if they ever pray at all, would find this one petition, for temporal good, to answer all their purposes, and cover all their ideas of their necessities.

'The truth lies between the extremes we have noted. While, on the one hand, the body is not to be despised, nor its real wants neglected ; on the other, it is not to be idolized, or made the chief object of attention and effort. It is indeed, the temple of the soul ; the residence of the mind ; and though we need not despise the casket, at the same time, we should not think more of it, than of the jewel it contains. The fact is, much of the development and activity of the intellect, as well as the growth, and right direction of the moral nature, depends upon the condition of the body. A mighty and active intellect, does not often dwell in a diseased, a pampered, or a starving body ; nor does a soul, adorned with all the higher moral qualities, more often, inhabit the like tenement. A well developed body, sound health, and a competent supply for the physical necessities, are somewhat essential conditions, for the attainment of the highest degrees of intellectual, or moral greatness ; so that the good of the soul and body both, should lead us to labor as required, and

pray as in the text, "give us this day our daily bread." But mark the moderate request of this petition. It does not pray for wealth. It does not ask for riches, to be laid up in store, and in abundance, for the future. It regards the present, alone, and asks for the necessary supplies for a single day only, and leaves the morrow with God. The reason of this, we shall see as we proceed. At present, it is sufficient to say, that this petition is in admirable keeping with the teaching of Jesus, where he says, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

But the facts of the present, and the circumstances that surrounded us, show, that our text should be considered prophetically; and in this light it looks forward to a time when distributive justice shall be done, and the affairs of the world shall be so administered, that want shall be unknown—when, to each individual, bread shall be given, and all the temporal conflicts shall

be so abundant, and the supply regulated by laws so unvarying, that men can employ themselves in remedying the remaining evils of the day, and there shall be no need of taking "thought for the morrow, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewith shall we be clothed?" The bare fact, that the Savior teaches us to pray for the supplies of the day alone, and forbids us to take an anxious thought for the morrow, is proof, that he contemplated a period such as we have named, as ordained in the wisdom, and fixed in the counsels of God.

The reason given, why we are not to be anxious for the future, as regards the supply of our bodily wants, is worthy of notice. It is not because food, and drink, and clothing are unnecessary—not because they are things that can be dispensed with, so that it is of little consequence whether we have them or not. The very reverse of this is the fact, and thus the divine teacher gives us the reason for his command, "your Heavenly Father knoweth

that ye have need of all these things." They are all at his disposal. He knows that we must have them—that they are so indispensable, that we cannot live without them. For this reason, he has provided for them. You need not therefore be anxious about the food of to-morrow, for God knows you must have it. There is a system of divine order, which you may call "the kingdom of God," if you please, in its material aspect, which will give it to one and all, and a time coming, when distributive justice shall be executed, and this result shall be realized. "Seek first this kingdom, and all these things shall be added unto you."

At present, and in this period of subversion and social discord, we grant, that it is difficult, and it requires a lofty and confiding faith, for a man to take care of the day only, and leave the morrow to care for itself. Amid the competitions of business—the schemings of ambition—the rivalries and injustice of trade—and the eager and everlasting clutchings of avarice, as well as the

hazard and uncertainty of human pursuits, the mind will revert to the future; and sometimes ask, with irrepressible anxiety, how will it fare with us to-morrow? The text, however, suggests the best remedy for the evil. Let justice begin with honor to a father and mother, and go on, until each man has what is his due, and then let us ask God for bread, but not under the vain idea, that he will interfere, and furnish it, by a miracle. His inflexible law is, that "man shall eat his bread, in the sweat of his face." And hence, it is true, that "idleness shall clothe a man in rags," and, "he that will not sow, neither shall he reap." But the man, who gives to all their dues from day to day, prays for his bread, will thereby be reminded of the means of obtaining it; and will be likely to be engaged industriously in some useful employment, as the means of subsistence.

At present indeed, there are many who pine in want, and sometimes ask in vain for bread; and it must be granted further, that, even industry, under existing regulations,

will not always secure a man against poverty for the present, and harrassing anxiety for the future. Nay, more than this. The astounding fact is true, that everywhere, all over the world, those who have least of earthly goods, and who are compelled most often, anxiously, and in vain, to ask what shall we eat, and what shall we drink, and wherewith shall we be clothed? are none else, than the very toiling masses, by whose industry, all food, and clothing, and wealth are produced. There is food, but they may not eat of it. There is clothing, but they may not wear it. Toil they never so hard the same sinking poverty is around them, and their most pressing wants are often but poorly supplied, for the day; and the morrow has little for them but the same round of toil and want. Doubtless it is best, under these circumstances, to do justice, to pray for the day, and leave the morrow to take care for itself; for truly, it may be said of such, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." But the text bids us "hope on, and hope ever," and pro-

phetically looks to the time, when want shall be known no more on earth. When all things, necessary for man's temporal sustenance and comfort, shall be so abundant, and distributed by such laws, that no man shall want, or lack anything needful for his support. The poets indeed, talk, and pretended philosophers speculate, about a "golden age" that has past. But the "golden age" of christian faith is to come; and we shall presently show you how, it is to come; though we cannot say when, for of it as of another epoch, it may be said, in truth, "of that day, and that hour knoweth no man."


Do you deem it impossible? Do you doubt that such a period is coming? Think for one moment. Never came there a word of such hope, or of mightier truth, from prophet, or seer, from man or angel, than that word of Jesus, which saith: "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Aye, verily God knew that we must have food, and raiment, and all temporal necessities; and therefore

provided all the means of obtaining them, in copious abundance. In the bosom of our old mother earth, there are garnered up mines of wealth, and inexhaustible treasures of all that can minister to the sustenance or comfort of man. Nor are they close locked or guarded, so that we cannot obtain them ; but, like a kind mother, she yields them up at our call. Richly does she reward the laborer for his toil, and bountifully does she yield her increase, in the " golden sheaves of the harvest." Freely, and abundantly, does she " bud, and bring forth, that she may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater." Under the gracious arrangements of God, " Seed time and harvest, summer and winter," succeed each other in regular succession ; and " he giveth us rain and fruitful seasons, and filleth our storehouses with food, and our hearts with gladness." In the midst of resources so vast, and treasures so abundant, we affirm it, as a truth, which is capable of demonstration, that, there is no invincible, or absolute necessity, that any human being should

lack anything necessary for the supply of all his temporal wants; much less, that the laboring masses should spend their lives in poverty, and in anxious efforts to solve what shall we eat, and wherewith shall we be clothed? Heaven has not lavished these bounties so freely upon us, for the purpose of leaving us unfed or unclothed. But the fact, that he has provided the means, is an indication, that they shall be employed—that there is a system of divine order, through which, these treasures may be made available to the extinction of human want; and “a good time coming” when this result shall be realized. Think again, how full and abundant are these provisions of our heavenly Father. The productive power of the earth has never yet been taxed to a tithe of its capacity. If you look over its surface, you will perceive that, vast regions have been abandoned to sterility and utter barrenness, of all that can minister to the wants of man. The wilderness and the desert spread far before us, as we travel. Swamps, untrod by human

footsteps, where pestilential miasma is engendered to spread disease and death, abound; and unredeemed, and uninhabited wastes are many. A small portion of the earth only, is cultivated, and even that, so imperfectly, that it yields not the half that it is capable of yielding. In all truth, it may be said, that to "replenish the earth" and "subdue it," is a work, that man has as yet hardly begun. No united and general effort has as yet been made, to this end. On the contrary, all labors, in this direction, have been disjointed and fragmentary, and of course, inefficient. The productive power of humanity, has been no more tested or taxed than that of the earth. The many have been consumers, the few only producers. Vast armies have been maintained for the purpose of desolating the earth, and have thus, not merely withdrawn millions from useful labors, and productive industry; but have been sustained, as mere leeches upon the body of humanity, at an expense, that would have made the whole earth as fertile as Eden, and placed every human

being beyond the danger, and above the fear of want. Unto this day, five hundred millions, out of the productions of human hands, are wasted, and worse than wasted, in Europe, in the support of drones, in the shape of men, with "plumes," "epaulets," "knapsacks," and "bayonets," whose business it is to eat the fruit of other men's labor, and whose trade it is, to kill. No wonder that there is poverty and barrenness on earth. No wonder, that men must look anxiously to the future, and pray often in doubt, in fear and trembling, and in vain, for bread. The true marvel is, that the race has not perished long ago; for had not God known, that we had need of these things, and provided for them, with a munificence as wonderful as it is free, long ere this, nakedness and famine would have been universal. But in the midst of this darkness there is hope. With half the globe uncultivated and waste—with myriad armies, preying like hungry wolves upon the productions of the earth—with masses in every land, who toil not, but consume much while



they produce nothing—with a few, rather than the many, engaged in productive industry, still, man has lived, and the vast multitude have had their daily bread. Not, indeed, without anxiety, and harrassing toil; nor yet, in such abundance, as might be desirable, nevertheless they have had it. Here then is encouragement to pray, and pray in faith, “Give us this day our daily bread.” The time must come, when bread shall be abundant, “and water sure.”

Suppose the myriad armies of which we have spoken, were disbanded, and should labor as earnestly to subdue and cultivate the earth, as they have labored, in the past, to waste and destroy it. Suppose the multitudes, who now live in idleness, or roll in luxury, and those that do nothing, towards augmenting the stores of supply, for the wants of man, should all engage in some employment, for developing the vast resources, that God has prepared and made accessible to man. See you not the result? Wealth would flow in broad rivers from one end of the earth to the other; and all tem-

poral good would be so abundant, that there would be enough, and more than enough, for every man woman and child, who treads upon the earth, or looks upon the sun, in the firmament. Supposing all this to be done; one thing more would be necessary in order to secure to every one, an answer to the prayer of the text. That one thing would be, the application of the principle of distributive justice, to the affairs of the world; and it is precisely to this that the text prophetically points. At present, the good things of the world, whatever may be their amount, are not distributed among men according to the principles of even handed justice. But such is the organization of human society, and such its laws and customs, that, the few clutch the fruit of the labors of the many. The man who brings the food out of the bosom of the earth, may not eat of it, but must give it to another. The fabricator of soft raiment, may not wear it, and they, whose toil clothes others in garments of beauty, must themselves "flaunt in rags." Let each man labor, as he is com-

manded, six days out of seven ; then let the principles of distributive justice be applied, so that each man shall have the fruit of his labor ; and the result would be all that the loftiest faith ever desired, or conceived in the prayer of the text. Behold, then, how just the sequence, and how philosophically accurate the position in which our text is placed. Moses promises no man, that even the practice of justice shall prolong his life, and make it go well with him, in a temporal point of view, unless he first submits to God's kingdom, and obeys God's will, by laboring six days in the week. So Jesus teaches no man to pray for, or believe that he shall receive all needed temporal good, until he has sought and found the kingdom of God—the true system of divine order, and engaged actively in doing God's will on earth. Let us go over again, with these steps of progress, as far as we have gone, that we may be familiar with the way. The first movement of man upward, is in the recognition of God, as the one and only God, and Father. "Thou shall have no other Gods before

me." "Our Father which art in Heaven." Next, reverence profound. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." "Hallowed be thy name." Next, submission and active obedience, producing abundance. "Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy." "Six days shalt thou labor." Next, the application of distributive justice, rendering to each man his due, and giving temporal good to all. "Honor thy father and thy mother." "Give us this day our daily bread." Thus you see the chain of consequents, and antecedents perfect. Distributive justice flows from abundance; abundance from labor, labor from submission, submission from reverence, and reverence from the knowledge of God. Or, lack of bread, flows from injustice, injustice from scarcity, scarcity from idleness, idleness from disobedience, disobedience from irreverence, and irreverence from ignorance of God, and the remedy is here provided, for all these evils.

Wonderful, most wonderful was the wisdom, which could thus, in a few simple

words, not only embrace human wants, but map out the future of man on earth, make law itself an oracle of truth, and give to the voice of prayer a guide through the journey of humanity, in all its stages, from the first step, to its consummation, when the evils that afflict us now shall be known no more.

SERMON IX.

THE EQUITY OF MERCY.

Thou shalt not kill.—Exodus, xx. 13.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.—MATT. VI. 12.

We have more than once had occasion to remark, in the course of this discussion, that the teachings of the Decalogue are rudimental. Instead of announcing directly the abstract principle of the law, Moses enjoins or prohibits some prominent act in which the principle is recognized or violated. Thus it is in regard to the command above quoted. Killing is a manifestation of an unforgiving and revengeful spirit, and the same principle that forbids us to kill, prohibits not only other acts of violence, but also the spirit from which they proceed. Hence we are taught, in the gospel, that, "He that hateth his brother is a murderer." Evi-

dently then, the commandment is broad ; and in that word which saith “ Thou shalt not kill,” is embraced the rudimental principle of that law which prohibits alike violence and the spirit from which it proceeds.

It is proper to remark further, that in the early stages of human society, the appeal of hatred and revenge is always to brute force, and violence and death are the frequent results. In the rude forms of savagism and barbarianism there is little of sacredness attached to human life, forgiveness is a weakness, and revenge often a duty ; and the mode of seeking revenge is not by injuring an enemy in his property, or in his circumstances, but in his person. Nor is this spirit satisfied with inflicting a moderate or even a severe personal chastisement.— On the contrary, it thirsts for blood and lifts its strong arm and strikes for the life. Hence you will perceive that the command, “Thou shalt not kill,” was aimed against what was the first, the most natural, and common manifestation of the spirit of hatred and revenge. For this reason there is great propriety in

the apostolic interpretation, which makes it cover the whole ground and prohibit the spirit from which murder proceeds.

Precisely the same principle, only in a higher and different manifestation is recognized in the prayer, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Here we rise above the negative prohibition of hatred and revenge, and learn positive forgiveness, in the most thorough manner, from the fact that we are taught to pray that we may be forgiven only as we forgive others. Here, also, we may see the same fitness and propriety that we have noticed in the law. As society advances, and becomes more enlightened and refined, killing is restrained in a measure, and there are presented other means through which hatred and malice may operate. A man will not now as formerly seek the life of his enemy on a trifling occasion; but he will seek to injure him in his property and his possessions. The relation of debtor and creditor becomes frequent in the business of the world; and the mere child can see that the same spirit which, in

an enlightened age, would cause the inexorable creditor to seize his debtor by the throat saying, "Pay me that thou owest," and cast him into the prison, would in a barbarous age lead a man to take the life of his fellow man under similar circumstances. This spirit the prayer prohibits, and inculcates in its stead forgiveness; and thus it appears that the command "Thou shalt not kill," and the prayer, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," are nearly allied in their rudimental principles; and that it is no arbitrary arrangement that leads us to consider them in their relations to each other. With these preliminary observations we will proceed to a more particular consideration of the subject presented in the prayer, according to its more common interpretation.

The term "debts" is usually understood as synonymous with sins; and in this view, the whole subject of "forgiveness of sin" is presented in this portion of the prayer. It is a subject of much importance; and while it is one upon which much is said, we have reason to fear that it is little understood.

The common idea is, that the forgiveness of sin consists solely in the remission of the penalty due to past transgressions. But this opinion, however popular it may be, is in our judgment utterly untenable. It seems liable to the following objections.

1. It represents the government of God as vindictive in its character; and places the divine mercy in conflict with justice.

It contemplates God as having made a law which is so hard and ungracious that he cannot execute it without detriment to the best interests of his government. It is an inflexible rule, which looks always backward never forward; and scourges men, merely because they have sinned, not that they may sin no more. With her eye looking backward, or if utterly blind, as usually represented, with her ear open only to the past, and deaf to the claims of mercy, stern justice holds the scales, and demands that so much punishment shall be meted out to so much guilt. It will not remit "one jot or tittle," of all that that is "nominated in the bond;" but the bond being broken, it insists

that the forfeit shall be paid to the uttermost farthing ; even if it take the pound of flesh nearest the heart. It is therefore retrospective and vindictive, not prospective or paternal. But in this dilemma, it is thought, mercy comes in, and in the act of forgiveness God suspends the operations of justice, and omits the infliction of the penalty of the law.

We cannot so regard the government of God. The better and the true view is, that God was as merciful when he made the law as when he executes it, and hath no need ever to suspend its operations, or abate its penalty. That law is no arbitrary rule, which metes out punishment by weight and measure ; and insists on scourging the transgressor ; with no object but retaliation ; and to the full amount of a definite number of stripes, merely because he has sinned. On the contrary, its fundamental claim is, "My son give me thy heart ;" and to promote that object all its penalties are inflicted. That end being secured, all the claims of justice are satisfied, and it may not inflict another

stripe. Short of that, mercy itself would not pause. In this light, you can see how it is that the man who loves the "Lord his God with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, and his neighbor as himself, has fulfilled the whole law." The claim of the law, in his case, has been satisfied, and justice goes not back to assert other claims, because there are no such claims upon any other principle than that of revenge.

2. Another objection to this view of forgiveness is, that it stands opposed to the most clear and explicit teachings of Scripture. If there is any one truth more clearly taught in the Bible than another, it is the oft repeated declaration, that "God will not clear the guilty." Not even the abundance of his mercy, nor the act of forgiveness itself can interfere with this rule, or allow the wicked to go unpunished. Hence it is said, "I am the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." "Though hand join in

hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished." Such is the explicit testimony of the sacred volume, showing expressly and beyond all controversy that under the government of God, the wicked must be punished; and that although he is "merciful and gracious," and forgives "iniquity, transgression and sin," yet "He will by no means clear the guilty." If these are the true principles of the divine government, and the mode of their administration, then most certainly that view of forgiveness which makes it a means by which the guilty may be cleared, and the wicked go unpunished, is incorrect and ought not to be received. We need not dwell on this popular view of the subject, for the child can see that it confounds God's law with the "*lex talionis*," or law of retaliation among men; sets mercy and justice at odds, and flatly contradicts the testimony of "Holy Writ," by proposing to every sinner a method of escape from just punishment; whereas, God says he "will by no means clear the guilty." What then, are we to understand by the forgiveness of sin;

and how shall we understand the prayer of the text, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors?" To answer this question we must begin at the foundation of the matter; and there is an important distinction which it is necessary for us to make in the outset. We allude to the fact, that the scriptures everywhere speak of the forgiveness of sin, and the act of forgiveness therefore has reference, not to the punishment, but to the sin itself. Not to the penalty of the law, but to the transgression of the law. Now sin is not always, or mainly, in the overt act, but it is in the soul of man, and so heart-searching are the requirements of the law, that it looks into the recesses of the soul, and pronounces the man who lusteth guilty of adultery, though no outward act is committed. This is sin, and this it is that forgiveness proposes to remove. Inasmuch, therefore, as punishment is often among the means of spiritual discipline and improvement, and an agent for purifying and removing these stains from the soul, it follows that forgiveness, or the taking away of sin, is perfectly consistent

with the idea of just punishment. Look now at the law of God. Its highest claims are love to God, and good will to man. It saith "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Now if a man loves not God, he violates the law whether his hatred is manifested in overt acts or not. And so, if a man loves not his neighbor, he is a sinner, and the sin is upon his soul, whether it breaks out in overt acts of violence or not; as it is written, he that hateth his brother is a murderer. Such are the claims of the law, and to enforce these claims is the object of the penalty. For this reason the penalty is not arbitrary, or vindictive. It is prospective not retrospective, and it seeks obedience to the law as its only object. If it accomplishes that end by one or ten stripes it is the same. In either case, justice is satisfied and has no claims to remit. Thus: Here is a man whose soul is at enmity with his Maker, and that enmity shows itself in his

thoughts, words and deeds. He is, of course, in darkness and doubt, in fear and torment, for such is the penalty of his sin. The law asks no more than this, "Son give me thy heart." At length he submits. He sees God in his true light, as taught by the experience and discipline through which he has passed; and he comes to love him with the whole heart. Do you not see, that the end of the law is attained; and that so far as this first great command is concerned, it has no further claim upon him. Justice is satisfied, and it cannot go back and scourge him, because he did not love God last year; for that would be revenge or retaliation, not justice. It is enough, that the man's sin is removed—that he now loves God, for in so doing, he fulfils the law; and stands where he would have stood, if he had not sinned. And this removal of sin, this restoration of the soul to the state of compliance with the law, is forgiveness; and often it happens, that punishment is an efficient means of securing this end; as in the case of Jerusalem, when it is said, "her warfare is accomplished; her iniquity is pardoned,

for she hath received of the Lord double for all her sins."

There is another command of the law, which must be regarded as fundamental. It is this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Here is a man whose heart is at enmity with his fellows; and instead of loving, he hates his neighbor. The consequences of that hatred are fatal to his present peace. Whether he shows it in acts of violence, or conceals it in his own soul, is of little consequence. He is a sinner, in either case, and as such, he suffers the penalty of the law, in the misery and darkness in which he dwells. At length, it comes to pass, that learning obedience from the things that he suffers, his hatred is purged out, and he comes to love his neighbor as himself. Pray what further claim has the law upon him? Or, what good end requires of justice that she should smite him? None at all. For this, "Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Thou

shalt not covet; and if there be any other command, it is fulfilled in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." So then, the taking away of this sin, and the conformity of the soul to the spirit of the law, instead of clashing with, or infringing on the claims of justice, is in fact the fulfilment of these claims. And this is forgiveness. The hatred is removed; the soul loves God and man. The whole law is fulfilled, and justice is satisfied; and the sin is remembered no more. Thus it is, that God forgives sin, by overcoming hatred with love; and thus fulfilling the law itself, rather than by arresting, or taking away its penalty.

You can see, in this view of forgiveness, how appropriate is the prayer, and how inflexible the rule, that it recognises. "Forgive our sins, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Exactly in this way, and in no other, does God forgive sin. Hence, the Savior says in our context, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you."

No arbitrary rule is this. But it is the result of that fixed principle indicated by the Apostle, when he says, "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?" All hatred is sin. To remove hatred, and fill the soul with love is forgiveness. But if a man hateth his neighbor, and feels towards him a hard and unforgiving spirit, that simple fact is the proof, that the love of God is not in his soul. In other words, his hatred is not taken away—his sin is not removed—he is not forgiven. Nor can he, from the very nature of the case, ever be forgiven, until he forgives his brother. All this is as simple as to say, that while a man hates he cannot love. While he hates his brother he cannot love his God; and the Lord himself, cannot forgive the one, while the other remains. Such is the "equity of mercy;" for there is justice and equity even in the administration of the mercy of God, as truly as there is mercy in his justice. Just in proportion as man loves and forgives his fellow man, he admits into his soul, the love

of God, and his sin of hatred is removed or forgiven. Hence, the propriety of the prayer "Forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

Thus far, we have admitted the correctness of the general opinion, that the term "debts," is to be understood as embracing sin, in its most comprehensive sense ; and on that hypothesis, we have given our explanation. There is no doubt that the general principle here involved may be applied in that extended sense. But at the same time, we should not lose sight of the specific application of the principle, which we find in the Decalogue or the Prayer. We have seen that Moses prohibits hatred and revenge, specially in reference to the matter of taking human life ; and Jesus inculcates forgiveness particularly in reference to debts and debtors, as is most evident from the literal import of the language he employs. Granted, if you please, that the terms may be understood as embracing all sin ; and yet, it is not less certain, that they embrace at least, their legitimate meaning, and are wor-

thy of deep consideration in that light. If we are bound to regard the spirit of the law, in restraining the workings of hatred in every form, surely we are bound to regard its letter which saith, "Thou shalt not kill." And so, if we are taught that it is our duty to forgive all manner of offences, it is a small thing that we forgive our debtors, as we hope to be forgiven; and vain will it be for us to pretend that we can come up to the spirit of the prayer, while we disregard its very letter.

It will be remembered, that the subject of "daily bread" was introduced in the preceding petition; and it will not fail to occur to you, that among the most serious obstacles, that stand in the way of giving to every man his daily bread, are the tresspasses of men upon the rights of others, and the rigid and inflexible application of the conventional laws of debt and credit.

A moment's reflection upon the past, and the present, will satisfy you that a great share of the poverty and suffering, that abound in the world, and the destitution of bread

on the part of many, is due to the fact, that men have trespassed on the rights of their fellow men. Nor need we pause to show at length, that hitherto the legislation of the world has given to the creditor a tremendous power over the debtor. The truth is apparent, on the surface of things, moreover, that this power has been used, even at the expense of "daily bread,"—that about the last thing that a man forgives his neighbor, is a debt. That must be paid, whether the debtor has bread or not; and of all crimes, poverty and debt are most unpardonable. In view of these facts, we imagine, it would be quite natural for the Savior when he had introduced the subject of daily bread, to refer next in order, to the most prominent causes of destitution. And to give his disciples a form of prayer, which should, every day, remind them that they were themselves debtors to God, for all that they had; and show them the importance of forbearance, and kindness, towards their debtors, and those that trespassed against them; so that they could acquiesce in, and pray for the

application of the rule, "with what mete ye measure, it shall be measured unto you again." Such is the rule, by which we **must** abide, and the best way to meet it, is to forgive, as we hope to be forgiven.

We now notice the regular consecutive order in which the subject of our text is placed, both in the Decalogue, and the Prayer. If we ask the cause of the hatred, and enmity that abound on earth, and manifest themselves in murder and war, which deluges the world in blood, we shall find a full share of it in the injustice that is rife in the land. Men are regardless of the rights of others, and in the great battle for gain which rages so hotly around us, each clutches all he can get, and holds it with a most tenacious grasp. Then comes strife and blood; and it is a fact, that a great portion of the bloodshed the world has seen, from the beginning, has originated in cupidity, and been engendered by a disregard of the rights of man, in the distribution of this world's goods. Little hope can there be, that so much as the letter of the law, which

says, "Thou shalt not kill," will ever be fully obeyed, until men shall come to regard sacredly, the principles of that distributive justice, which begins in "honoring a father and a mother," and ultimately renders to all their dues. Let that be done, and then murder and war will cease; for such is the next, and the natural step. Hence Moses placed the command which prohibits revenge and bloodshed in its proper position, as following the introduction of equal justice to all.

And so the Savior teaches us to pray for daily bread, before we ask for a forgiving spirit, because he knew that the former must come first. So long as the principles of distributive justice are disregarded, and half the world are poor and pining for bread, so long will men be hard, unforgiving and ungracious, and creditors inexorable. But though this justice were done, it would not be all that is necessary. Supposing there is an abundance for all human wants; suppose it distributed by justice, which gives to every man his own; still there would be an

evil to be remedied. Some there are, and indeed, many there must be, who would be without bread. The aged and infirm, the sick and the feeble, the unfortunate and the improvident, must suffer, for they can produce nothing; or, if they have produced, they have failed to lay it up in store, for the day of their calamity. Strict, rigid justice, would give them nothing; and for their daily bread, they must become debtors to others. But if the creditor is hard and ungracious, if he insists upon the application of what he calls justice, and like the servant in the parable, to whom we have before alluded, goes out and siezes his debtor by the throat, for a debt of an hundred pence, saying, "pay me that thou owest," and casts him into prison; the result is plain, and the effect miserable.

What we want, as the next step, is the spirit of mercy, which will forgive the debtor in cases of necessity; and take the equity of it, in the knowledge of the truth, that as he forgives, so shall he be forgiven. And thus, justice and mercy must meet, and har-

monize, in that time, when God's "will shall be done on earth as it is done in heaven ; " and by active obedience to that will, there shall be an overflowing abundance, for the supplies of all human want ; and that abundance shall be equitably distributed. Until that time comes, men will never forgive their debtors.

A moment's further thought will show you, that the great reason why the relations of debtor and creditor, are so antagonistic ; and why the former so often grinds the face of the latter, and takes from his hand the children's bread, is, that God's will has not been actively done, and the supplies have not been abundant. And then again, men have so tresspassed upon the rights of their fellows, that what supplies there are, are not justly distributed ; and in this clutching for gain, the chances of success are precarious, and the danger of want is so imminent, that each man seeks, first of all, to take care of himself ; and is compelled as it were, in self defence, to demand and insist upon the uttermost farthing, of all that belongs to him ;

and he cannot forgive his debtor, without endangering himself. But remove this want, this necessity ; let God's will be so done, that there shall be an abundance for all ; let that abundance be distributed in justice, and there will be no longer need of rigid exactions ; for men can afford to exercise mercy, and forgive their debtors when necessary, as they hope to be forgiven of God. You see then, that the Savior placed this petition in the right place, and taught us to pray, as we shall pray, and realize the answer, at that time when want shall be banished from the world, and lack of bread shall be a " thing that was, but is no more."

We have all along considered our subject as a form of prophecy ; and in this light we must contemplate it for a moment. The law is, " Thou shalt not kill," and the assurance is, that this law shall not fail in one jot or tittle until it is fulfilled. See we not, then, here foretold, the time, when violence shall no more be done in all the earth ? Then shall human life be a sacred thing that man may not touch—war shall be known

no more, and peace shall reign triumphant and universal.

So the Savior teaches us to pray for a soul full of the spirit of forgiveness; and authorises the faith, that there is a time coming, when this prayer shall be answered. Then revenge shall die—love shall abound, and oppression and extortion shall cease to be. Let the down trodden millions of the earth rejoice, for the day of their redemption cometh.

SERMON X.

THE STRUGGLE WITH TEMPTATION.

Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. **Exodus xx. 14, 15, 16.**

And lead us not into temptation.—**Matt. vi. 13.**

The Decalogue, in the clauses above quoted, contemplates and prohibits three forms of evil, which, although they may, at first thought, seem to be separate and distinct; yet, it is evident that their causes are very nearly allied, so that in this respect, they may be placed under one head. They are vices into which men are led always by the power of temptation, and for mere selfish gratification; and this is perhaps more especially true of these than of any other evils in the law. The lusts of the flesh, the love of gain, and the desire to exalt self at the expense of others, are the fruitful sources of adultery, theft and falsehood. Into neither

of these vices do men run, except they are drawn thither by the power of temptation. Hence the need of constant avoidance and resistance of temptation; and hence too, it may be seen, that when the Savior teaches us to pray for safety from temptation, he lays the axe at the root of these vices, in an especial manner, and gives us a petition whose fulfillment would meet the requirements of these three commands. Moses forbids adultery, theft, and falsehood specifically, while Jesus sums them up, and prays for deliverance from them in that one sentence, "Lead us not into temptation." It is doubtless true, that there are few, if any sins, into the commission of which men are not led by temptation. But while this truth is admitted, in all its length and breadth, yet, in reference to these here enumerated, the temptation is direct, and often powerful; and continues, when the incentives to many other forms of vice have passed away. Moreover, let it be noted, that although the prayer doubtless refers to temptation of every sort, and inculcates resistance to it in every

form, it is not the less true, that it may be applied specifically, and with peculiar emphasis to those particular vices, here specially prohibited in the Decalogue.

In reference to this form of petition, we remark, that some have objected to the propriety of the translation of this passage, on the ground that God never tempts men; and therefore, it is improper for us to pray that he will not lead us into temptation; because that is a thing he cannot do. To this it has been replied, that the original is an Hebraism, in accordance with which the Deity is said to do whatever he permits to be done; and the meaning is, "preserve us from temptation," or, "suffer us not to be led into temptation." Others have thought that the meaning would be better expressed thus, "Abandon us not unto temptation;" or, "Abandon us not in temptation."

The difference appears to us to be slight, and we see no valid objection to the common translation. The truth is, although "man's heart deviseth the way, yet the Lord directeth his steps;" and if God has surrounded

man with temptations, we see nothing inconsistent or irreverent, in the idea, that he should lead him through them; and so direct his steps, that he should be subjected to their influence. Nevertheless, we may hope for a time, when man shall have passed the ordeal; and hence we may pray in faith, saying, "Lead us not into temptation."

The "origin of sin," or, in other words, the cause of man's aberrations from the path of duty, and his violations of the laws of God, has been a fruitful subject of controversy in the christian church. Some have traced it to the innate and total depravity of human nature, which is vitally opposed to all that is good, and which is as naturally prone to evil as the sparks are to fly upward. To them, all sin is the spontaneous and legitimate outgrowth of the human soul, which is depraved and corrupt in all its powers and faculties. Others believe that a malignant, superhuman agent, called the devil, is the father of sin; that he beguiled and tempted man, and thus led him astray, from the path of virtue and obedi-

ence. To his diabolical influence and artful wiles they attribute all the sin of the world. Our own opinion is, that there is no necessity of supposing man to be totally depraved; much less is there any need of the aid of a supernatural devil, in order to account for all the sin the world has ever seen. We have only to start with the truth, so clearly asserted in the Scriptures, that "man was made subject to vanity;" and then consider the temptations to which he is subjected, and the whole problem is solved, and an adequate cause is assigned for sin. Inasmuch as God employs no unnecessary agents to accomplish a given end; and as it is a rule of philosophical investigation, never to assign more causes for a given effect than are necessary for its production, we reject entirely the idea of total depravity, as well as the doctrine of the devil, with which last we are commanded to have no fellowship. We take the liberty in passing to suggest that those who believe in total depravity might, with propriety, dispense with the agency of the devil in accounting for sin;

for surely a totally depraved being, to whom sin is as natural as his very breath, hath no need of a devil to tempt him, more than a hungry man hath need of a tempter to induce him to eat. And so, also, it would seem that those who attribute all sin to the wiles of an omnipresent and semi-omnipotent spirit of evil, might afford to dispense with the idea of total depravity in their philosophy of the origin of sin. For us, who see the causes of sin in the imperfection of human nature, and in the temptations that throng around us, we have no need of either of the above doctrines, to aid us in solving the problem. We look over the history of the world, and find it stained and polluted with sin. Man everywhere has been the enemy of man. War has scourged the nations, and desolated the fairest fields that ever bloomed on earth. Ambition has vaulted to the skies; and oppression has ground its victims to the dust, and all over the world sin has abounded. We look around upon the present, and we find that it is even so now. In some respects, and in

some portions of our race, there has been a marked improvement, so that many of the abominations of the past are no longer practiced. Nevertheless, sin remains, and though in some of its forms it lurks in secret and hides its head in shame, yet, in others, it walks unmasked at noon day, and shuns not the light of the sun. Avarice seeks for gold, and pauses not at the means of obtaining it. Ambition strives for honor and for power, and to attain them tramples upon the rights of man and the principles of virtue. Lasciviousness and adultery dwell in dens of infamy and hells of depravity, and invade the sanctuary of domestic bliss. Theft lurks in darkness, and steals the fruit of honest toil or the gains of dishonesty alike. Slander utters her lies and bears her false witness to blast the reputation of a brother. Covetousness seeks that which is not its own, and robs the husband of his wife, or the laborer of his hire. Murder stalks with bloody hands through the world; while intemperance reels, and swaggers, and wallows in the mire; and war lifts its iron arm

and slays its thousands, and fills the air of heaven with the wail of the orphan, and the moan of the widow. But dark as this picture may be, and terrible as is the aggregate of sin thus presented to view, yet, we see no need of going beyond the frailty of man, and the temptations with which he is surrounded in search of a cause fully adequate to the effect. For the honor of human nature, as well as its author, it is to be hoped that all this amount of sin is not the result of the natural and unbiased action of the powers of that human soul, which was made in the image of its God. Rather would we say that human nature is essentially right, and its impulses onward and upward; but it is better to say that it has been drawn aside from its true course, by the influences to which it has been subjected, for wise and good purposes; than tax the all wise God with creating a being whose nature is evil, and only evil, and then requiring good at his hands. In the latter case, God would be as the task-masters of Egypt, who required the children of Israel to deliver the full tale of brick,

while they refused to furnish the material of which the article was made. If we will examine the matter for one moment in the detail, we shall find that the view we have presented is abundantly sustained by the facts of the case. Few are the men, exceedingly few, who love the vices that they practice for their own sakes, or who have gone into them for the mere love of them. Many, very many there are, who are pursuing courses of infamy and crime, who were, as they think at least, drawn into vice as by an irresistible necessity. Often the drunkard is tempted by friends, and by the exercise of what he has been taught to regard as a social virtue, to drink of the intoxicating glass until the craving appetite has been formed, and he is led as a captive deprived of power. Many a time and oft has his better nature rebelled and struggled for the mastery over the temptation. But the resolution was weak and the temptation strong, and at last he was conquered. But even in his bonds, and down low in the depths of his sorrow and sin, nature is true to itself,

and suggests the better way, and writhes like a child in the grasp of a giant; and cries, but often cries for relief in vain. And so of frail virtue, which falls like a withered flower and hides its shame in dens of infamy and vice. It was not the free and unbiased offering of virtue and innocence upon the altar of sin. But it was the power of temptation that triumphed over the better nature, in the first instance; and alas! such are the customs and conventional rules of society, the first step is irretrievable, and with it hope must well nigh expire, so that there remains little hope of a life of virtue, when once it is taken. Not that the victim walks willingly in that path as a general thing. Nay, but the better nature would return full often, was not the way blocked up, and the doors of entrance to the temple of virtue barred. Many a frail daughter of vice would abandon the service of sin to-day, could she see the way opened by which she could save herself from the hungry wolf, and the "slow contempt of scorn's unmoving finger," in another course of life. And so of theft: there are few

cases of mere wanton and spontaneous violation of that law which says, "Thou shalt not steal." Men do not steal from the mere promptings of their nature and the simple love of stealing. But there is always a temptation and often an imperious necessity, either imaginary or real. This man is poor. The structure of society and all its laws and customs are such, that the world is a great battle field, where gain is the prize for which all enter the lists and strive as best they may. In that battle this man has fallen and failed. He has perhaps a family dependent upon his exertions for a subsistence, and his children cry for bread. His very right to labor, except at the bidding of others, is taken away, and toil he cannot because none will hire him. To beg he is ashamed. There are souls strong enough to pass unscathed through an ordeal like this; but there are others who are overwhelmed by the circumstances around them, and seeing the means of satisfying their wants in abundance around them, the temptation is too much for them. They yield, and lay their

hands unlawfully upon their neighbor's goods. The arrest, the disgrace, the trial and the prison follows; and henceforth he is a marked and a doomed man. He comes out from that prison to see his children in an alms house, or in the street begging their bread. The faces of his brethren are averted. He asks for labor, but none will employ a graduate from the prison. No kind word of encouragement cheers him. His wants press heavily upon him, and he goes, as his last resort, to the abodes of vice and seeks there the bread that virtue denies him. Poor fallen man! Once in the downward road his ruin is sealed, and a life of crime and a death of infamy is his history. But it was not all his fault. He fell a victim to the circumstances that surrounded him, and the temptations that pressed heavily upon him. Under other circumstances and better influences he might have taken another course, and been an ornament to society and a blessing to our race. As it was, there is no reason to suppose that he chose the course he pursued for the mere love of it;

or that he embraced it without strong temptation. We do not say that all cases of theft may come fully under the description we have here given. But we do give it as our judgment that there are many such, and that in all, there is temptation at the bottom of the evil.

Those who have passed through a portion of the years usually allotted to man as the period of his pilgrimage on earth, know full well, that ten thousand temptations have assailed them; and if they have preserved their virtue, it has cost them many a stern conflict with the evil influences that have constantly assailed them. And those of us who have children, fear not so much their natural depravity, as the temptations that beset them on every side. Leaving them to their own better natures, we would have little fear for them. But, all abroad in society, and especially in our large towns and cities, full well do we know, that they can scarcely go beyond the domestic fireside, or step a foot in the street, without encountering some tempting bait, to lure them from the

path of virtue. All creeds and confessions to the contrary, these temptations are by the masses of community, feared more than total depravity, or all the devils in which men believe.

When we remember, that of these influences, it may be said in truth, "their name is legion, for they are many,"—that they throng in every avenue of life, and meet us at every turn—that they put on forms and garments of beauty to entice and deceive—that they meet us often in the guise of virtue itself, and utter their lies in the name of truth and duty—and when we remember how successful they are, and how many and how often they deceive, and tempt men on to ruin, and how miserable are the results, then we can perceive the necessity and the propriety of that daily prayer, which looking up to the dispenser of our destinies, says, "Lead us not into temptation." Weak and feeble, erring and irresolute, frail and fickle as we are, "Lord save us from temptation, lest we fail and fall." Spare us the trial of our strength, which is but weakness; or if


thou seest best to subject us to the trial of our faith and virtue, abandon us not, in the hour of our need, but grant us thine aid that we may endure and come out unharmed from the conflict. Such is the spirit of this petition, and situated as we are at present, there is not in the whole prayer a petition more needful or important. Nor is there one that may be presented to our Heavenly Father with a more earnest, or a more unfaltering faith. This will lead us to notice at length, that this petition, as well as all others in the prayer, is to be regarded in the light of a prophecy. The same divine teacher, who has taught us to pray, saying, "lead us not into temptation," has authorised the faith, which gives the assurance, that the prayer shall be answered, to the joy and blessedness of the whole earth. Far off, it may be, yet fixed in the plans of God, and certain to come, is the time, when the perfect law of liberty shall prevail. The temptations that so beset us, and draw us aside from the path of duty, shall have passed away; and freely and unbiassed by fear,

or temptation, shall each man follow the promptings of his better nature, bow to the teachings of the spirit within him. Then one law shall bind all nations, even the law of love, and that law shall not be obstructed or hindered in its operations, by false systems and forms; which make a departure from it, the condition of prosperity. Tempted no more, man shall love God for his goodness, and virtue for its own sake, and shall have no motive to entice him from the one or the other. Such is the faith in which this petition should be offered, and without this faith, the man who offers it, insults his Maker, by asking him to give what he is assured he cannot or will not bestow. And so of the commands in the Decalogue, to which this petition, in some measure corresponds. They are a "sure word of prophecy." Not one of them shall fail, until all be fulfilled. The law is in this case as in all others, the indication of destiny; and points to the time, when man shall have achieved the victory over temptation, that he shall no more follow the lusts of the flesh, to do the works there-

of; but shall yield all his members up to the service of the living God. And all this is as certain, as that the law fails not.

It remains to be noted, that both the commands, and the petition, occupy their true position, so that each follows the next preceding, in its true order of succession. There are doubtless many causes of temptation, which must pass away before the day of the fulfilment of the text. Among these we may note the unequal distribution of this world's goods, and the hard and unforgiving spirit of the world, and the consequent poverty and want, injustice and oppression, to which many are subjected. When labor has toiled, and brought forth its abundance, and the laborer is permitted to enjoy no more than a bare pittance of the fruit of his toil, sufficient to keep him from absolute hunger, and often not even that much, the temptation is strong to break through the conventional rules by which he is bound, and appropriate to self, what the world gives to another. When the strife for gain is hot, and the chances of success few, and the

danger of failure and poverty with all its attendant evils imminent, the temptations to avarice, fraud, and dishonesty, are many, and it is not a matter of astonishment that all sorts of peculations abound, or that the fields of business, and the marts of trade are rife with schemes of treachery, and wily arts, practiced for gain. So also, when man is hard and ungracious in judgment, and grinds his brother to the earth, for the sake of gold. When he will not forgive his debtor, but casts him into prison saying, "thou shall not come out thence until thou hast paid the uttermost farthing," then does the nature rebel, and the temptation to return evil for evil is most powerful. Accordingly, if you look around you, and mark the crimes that so abound, it will appear evident, that by far the greater part of them grow out of the business affairs of the world, and the trespasses that men make upon the rights of their fellow men, which are not forgiven, but give rise to oppression and and revenge. Imagine now, that this prayer of the Savior, and this command of



Moses, to the point where our text comes, is fulfilled. The one God is seen as our Father, which art in Heaven. His name is hallowed, revered in the human soul, and no more taken in vain. His kingdom has come and men have submitted to it, and are engaged in active obedience to his will, in the alternations of labor and rest. Of all earthly goods there is an overflowing abundance. Distributive justice has taken place, so that each man has his own, and every human being can be sure of "daily bread," and is above the fear of want. The equity of mercy is practiced, so that hatred and revenge are not practiced, and men will be lenient and merciful, and "forgive their debtors, even as they hope to be forgiven of God." When all this shall be done; do you not see that freedom from temptation is the next and necessary step. It is precisely at that point that the command and prayer of the text comes in; and it is most evident, that they will be fulfilled and answered, when, and only when the preceding steps shall have been taken. So

long as men are obliged to spend their lives in harrassing toil, and trembling anxiety, upon the question of daily food and means of subsistence ; with want and poverty always menacing them. So long as men trespass upon the rights of others, and with unforgiving spirit, grind one another to powder for gold, insisting on what they call, justice, and refusing to abate a farthing on the side of mercy, just so long will temptations to wrong throng our pathway, and assail us on every side, and theft, adultery, and falsehood abound. But let there be enough for all. Let it be so distributed that want shall be unknown. Let mercy be exercised freely ; and then will the worst forms, and most numerous hosts of temptations vanish. It is a blessed boon that the Master has taught us to pray, and even Moses instructed us to hope, in faith for the time, when the tried and the tempted, the worn and the weary, shall rest from the stern conflicts in which they have engaged, and the great race shall realize the fruition of that prayer, which cries to heaven, saying, "lead us not into temptation."

SERMON XI.

THE VICTORY OVER EVIL.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife ; nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

EXODUS xx. 17.

But deliver us from evil.

MATT. vi. 13.

Of all the commands in the Decalogue, this alone, looks beyond the outward act, and directly and specifically takes cognizance of the thoughts and desires of the heart. It contemplates the removal of the preceding evils, and lays its interdict upon the last sources of sin, to wit : the secret thoughts, and the unlawful desires of the soul. Hence the Savior, sums up also the same general idea, under the form of prayer, which saith, " deliver us from evil," and in this case, as in all others, it is manifest, that the answer to the prayer is the fulfil-

ment of the command. Those who are delivered from evil, will have their thoughts in subjection, and will no more unlawfully covet anything that rightfully belongs to another.

In the original form of prayer, the article is prefixed to the word rendered evil, and literally, it would read "deliver us from the evil." Hence some read it thus, "deliver us from the evil one." The true idea is that, of evil in the aggregate, personified, as wisdom, and prudence, and other virtues, as well as vices, are frequently personified, in the Scriptures. It embraces not some few forms of evil, but evil in itself, and in all its forms and manifestations; and the prayer is, for deliverance from this enemy of human happiness.

One of the most difficult and perplexing problems, in religion, and philosophy, is that which relates to the subject of evil. What is evil? How came it into the world, and why? What mission has it to perform, and will it ever end? These are questions of momentous interest, and they have for ages,

been discussed with a zeal, worthy of their importance, if not in a spirit becoming the christian profession. To say that these questions are free from serious difficulties, and embarrassments, would be to assume a wisdom above the wisest and the best of men, in the past and the present; and to promise a full and satisfactory answer, would be to promise what we may safely say, has never yet been performed. Under these circumstances, we approach this subject with diffidence, and with a deep sense of the difficulties with which it is surrounded; and though we may not dogmatize, with great assurance, yet, we may offer a few thoughts, which, it is hoped will prove of some service, in our attempts to fathom the mystery of evil. Our first remark is, that the term, evil, as commonly employed, is exceedingly indefinite. We talk much of evil, but it is apprehended, that there are few of us who are prepared to answer, clearly and definitely, the question, "what is evil?" Is it a positive entity, a substance, or thing that exists, "*per se*?" If so, how came it into

being? Did God create it? Or was it created, and introduced into the universe by some foreign power, without the consent, and against the will of God? Our idea is, that evil is not a positive entity, at all—not a substance, but a shadow; an incident, or a circumstance, and not a thing, that occupies the position of a real essence in the universe. God is himself the author of all things, and from him proceeded every real existence in “creations ample round.” He is good, purely good, and inasmuch as like produces like, all that proceeds from him must be good and only good. To say, that there is any positive entity in existence, that is evil, is to say, that God himself is partially evil, or else, a sweet fountain must have brought forth bitter waters. For this reason we give it as our judgment, that in the sense of a real entity, a positive thing, having an absolute identity, there is no such thing as evil, in all the universe of God. But, in the sense of an incident, a circumstance, or shadow, rather than a substance, there is much of evil in the world. Indeed,

every substance projects its shadow. The earth itself has its shadow, and for this reason, one half of it is always dark. But that darkness is not a substance, or a real entity. It is but an incident, attendant upon the situation of the sun, the shape of the earth, and its rotation upon its axis. Doubtless there are temporary inconveniences attendant upon those dark shadows, which envelope one half of the earth's surface in night; and to the extent of these inconveniences, in an isolated view, you may speak of this circumstance as an evil. But to call the darkness an evil, in the absolute sense of the word, is to overlook the truth, that hence comes the season when nature is hushed in silence, and man can obtain his needed repose; and all the beautiful alternations of day and night, which add so much to the sum of happiness on earth; and in this view, nothing is more evident than the truth, that the whole system is good, and only good, and all the evil there is about it, is a mere incidental circumstance, unavoidable if you please, nevertheless, without a posi-

tive identity, or the attributes of a real essence. Thus, we look upon all that we call evil. The universe of matter, is an inert instrument, in the hand of God, for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes. The application of laws to this shapeless mass, and the process of moulding it into forms of beauty, and bringing it into harmonious obedience to the laws of the Creator, gives rise to circumstances, and incidents, that produce temporary discord, and inconvenience, and even suffering. Hence comes, what we call physical evil, all of which is but incidental to the great and beneficent movements of nature, seeking harmony, and tending only, and always to good. And so of moral and spiritual evil, as it is called. Humanity itself is God's work. Its dwelling, for the present, at least, is on earth, where the spirit inhabits the body. But the very contact of the spiritual with the material, or, as some would say, the mere process of evolving the spiritual from the material, necessarily gives rise to circumstances, and incidents, that

produce temporary inconveniences, and often severe sufferings. The moral law can no more arrest its power, and establish its dominion, and its harmonies in the soul of humanity, without temporary discord, and evil, than the harmonies of the physical universe can succeed chaos, without commotion. Hence comes moral evil.

Thus much of evil in the aggregate. If we attempt to descend to particulars, we are met with many difficulties. Few men would hesitate to affirm, that there is, beyond all doubt, a vast amount of evil in the world; but, it is not an easy matter, for a man to lay his finger upon an individual thing, and say: This is unquestionably an "evil under the sun." Take a case in point. This man is sick. Severe and painful disease is upon him. He rolls and tosses upon his bed, as pain shoots through his limbs, and tears his nerves. He will, perhaps, point to this pain, and say he has found an unmitigated evil. But let us look at it for one moment, and see what is its amount. Our bodies are made of earthly materials, and

are necessarily subject to certain laws, and to the influence of the elements amid which we must needs live. Dangers to life and health, are numerous. Hence, God has given us nerves having a two fold mission. The first is, to place us in sensible contact with the world around us, and enable us to enjoy physical pleasure ; and the next, and the incidental mission is, to guard the avenues of life, and warn us of approaching danger. This last they do through pain. When an enemy approaches, or enters the physical system, pain warns us of his coming, or presence, and points us to the very spot where he lurks, and thus enables us to expel him. But for pain, a man would die without knowing that he was sick. So then, there is a great good connected with even the pains we bear ; and all the evil there is in the arrangement, is incidental, not primary, or absolute. And so of any other instance. However confident we may be that it is an unmitigated evil, yet an examination will show, that the prime object of the arrangement is good ; and all the evil there is about

it, is incidental or circumstantial, not positive or absolute. Thus, and thus only, can we reconcile the evils of the world, with the idea of the infinite goodness of its Creator, and Governor. Any other view, will make God himself evil, and charge him with malignity, in originating that, which is worse than useless. It is in vain to say, that man is the author of all evil, and equally vain to plead that it originated with a fallen spirit, called the Devil. God is himself the sole author of this universe, and all it contains. To say that God made man, and man made evil; or that God made Satan, and Satan made evil, is a mere subterfuge, a sort of special pleading, to blind the eyes of the ignorant, and cover a retreat from an untenable position. It removes the difficulty one step only, and there leaves it as utterly insurmountable as it was before. If the evil is positive and absolute, God might as well make it himself, and have done with it, as to make a man, or a devil, and permit him to introduce it; and knowing the result, had he been infinitely good, he would have made

neither one nor the other. Nor does the plea, that man is a free agent, alter the complexion of the case in the least. If God could not make a free agent, without running the hazard of the introduction of an absolute and ruinous evil, why then, it were better to have made a machine which would at least, have been harmless. In any, or all these aspects, the case is the same. In no other way can we vindicate the ways of God, but by the admission, that evil is not an entity, or an end, but only an incident, or a means, and destined, at last, to be swallowed up of good.

In this sense, therefore, we use the term evil; and we wish so to be understood whenever we use it in this discussion. Whether we have given the true philosophy of evil, or not, one thing is certain; it accords with the spirit and letter of our text, "Deliver us from evil." The bare fact, that the Savior teaches us so to petition our Heavenly Father, is proof, that with him, evil was no fixed and irrevokable fact in the universe, but a mere incidental circumstance, a tem-

porary phenomenon, for deliverance from which, man may pray in earnest faith, and ardent hope. Bearing constantly in mind, that such is the nature, and such the end of all evil, we may now proceed to consider some of the forms in which it appears; and from which, we may especially pray for deliverance. We shall most thoroughly accomplish this work, by following the path indicated by the preceding part of the prayer, which will lead us at once, to a survey of the whole ground, and show that this petition occupies, like all the others, its true and natural position, and present in connection, the evil and the remedy.

Idolatry stands first on the list, and its remedy is in the first sentence of the prayer. The recognition of God as our Father, in the words, "Our Father who art in heaven." Man is naturally a religious being; and among his first and most prominent impulses or instincts, if you please to call them such, is that which leads him to acts of devotion to superior powers. It is, in itself, a good thing; but incidental to it, is the perverted

action of this principle, which constitutes the evil. Unguided by reason, and unenlightened by revelation, man blindly follows this impulse, and worships "he knows not what." Hence idolatry, in its countless forms. The sun, the moon, the stars, the beasts and creeping things of the earth, and images of wood and stone, have been objects of human worship. Thus human nature has been degraded and debased. Whereas, God made man in his own image, and placed him at the head of creation, and forbade him to worship even the angels, or acknowledge any superior, but his Maker; man has degraded himself, by bowing in adoration before the creatures of earth. Even unto this day, this wide spread evil prevails, and the large portion of our race are given to idolatry, with all its cruel rites, and profligate immoralities. Temples are reared, and altars smoke, and victims bleed, as offerings to Gods that are no Gods; and man is thus debased, well nigh to a level with the brutes. But wide and ruinous as is this evil, it is not a fixed and perpetual thing. On the

contrary, Moses aimed the first blow at it, in that first command of the Decalogue, in which he announces the irrevocable law of God, thus: "Thou shalt have no other Gods besides me." And Jesus gave it its death wound, when he taught us, as the first word in our acts of devotion, to look up to God, and to him alone, saying, "Our Father who art in heaven." If indeed, it be "easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than one jot or one tittle of the law to fail, until all be fulfilled," then may we pray in faith for deliverance from this gigantic evil; confident that our prayer will be answered, and that there is a time coming, when men shall "worship the Father in spirit and in truth," and idolatry, with all its brood of sins, shall be known no more on earth. Next upon the catalogue of evils, is human pride. It is true, that God would have a man esteem himself so highly, that he shall worship none but the Infinite One. Incident to this exaltation, and self regard, is its excess in lofty pride, exalting itself above God himself, and showing itself in irreverence for God, and

blasphemy of the name of the Most High. We need not speak at length of this evil ; for we have in a previous discourse treated it at length. It comports with the object of our present labor to say, that although, thus far in the world's history, man has been proud, reverencing not his God, and blaspheming his name ; yet, this is not an evil from which there is no deliverance. At it, the thunders of Sinai were hurled, in that second command of the Decalogue, " Thou shalt not take the name of thy God in vain." Jesus also saw the evil, and taught us to pray in faith, for deliverance from it, in that second sentence of the prayer of prayers, " Hallowed be thy name ; " and unless the eternal law of God proves a nullity, and christian faith a delusion, there is an era coming, when pride shall no more exalt itself against God ; but his name shall be hallowed and mentioned only with reverence profound, by human lip or tongue.

Another evil that abounds, is opposition to the government of God, and disobedience to his will, in the affairs and the business, and

duties of the world. Man was made for action ; and the law of his being is, that he must be busy and industrious. Hence, when God first placed him upon the earth, he gave him something to do. He commanded him to dress and to keep the garden, and to replenish and subdue the earth. Incident to this necessity for labor, is the evil of excessive toil, for man needs rest, and must have it. And here also, there is an incidental evil, in the practice of which, indolence is justified under the plea of needed rest. These two evils, so nearly allied, are neither limited or inconsiderable. They affect different classes of men, and it is not easy to determine which suffers the most. On the one hand, are the humble, and the poor and toiling masses, who are worn and jaded with labor, and who wear their lives away in wasting toil, without the rest, needed to recruit their exhausted powers, or the time to improve, or cultivate their mental, or moral natures. Toiling on, and toiling ever, they become hewers of wood and drawers of water, and live and die, with half their powers devel-

oped. On the other hand, there is a class, who are willing to rest, and spend their days in idleness, and whose souls and bodies both, are never worn, but are eaten with rust, and go soon to decay. The antagonism between these classes is constant, and the evils flowing from these sources is not the least among the causes of human suffering. But from these evils there is hope for deliverance. The law of God thunders its protest against them, in the commands, "Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor; but the seventh is the Sabbath. In it thou shalt not do any work." And for that same submission and active obedience to the will of God, Jesus teaches us to pray, saying, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." So then, there is hope for man, that he may yet be delivered from these evils; and in reference to them, there is an inducement for him to pray, saying, "Deliver us from evil."


Poverty and destitution, a lack of daily bread, originating in disobedience to God,

and disregard of the principles of distributive justice ; giving rise to avarice, strife for gain, dishonesty, fraud, oppression, deception, and all sorts of overreaching, treachery and deceit, are also evils, whose magnitude it were difficult to estimate, and whose effects are most miserable. But these are not the permanent and eternal realities of the universe. They are rather the incidents of the perverted and misguided action of man's care for himself, and his desire to lay up in store for the day of calamity. At the foundation of all these, was aimed that divine command, the first to which a promise was attached, and which enjoined the rudiment of all justice, in rendering honor to whom honor is due, saying, "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long, and that it may be well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." For the practical application of this distributive justice, and the extinction of poverty and want, christian faith is taught to pray, saying, "Give us this day our daily bread," and in reference to all the evils noted, we may

also pray, as in the text, "Deliver us from evil."

We cannot dwell at length. Revenge and cruelty, demanding what it calls justice; refusing to forgive, and leading, often to murder of individuals, and war of nations, are sore and dreadful evils. They are the incidents of a sense of justice, and a proper idea of self protection, perverted, or misdirected in action. The law of God pronounces their doom, in that stern command, which says "Thou shalt not kill;" and the prayer of faith, contemplates their end, when it cries unto God, saying, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." When that law shall be fulfilled, as it surely must be; and when that prayer is answered, as we are taught that it shall be, then revenge shall cease, the equity of mercy shall be understood, and practiced everywhere—brother shall no more lift up his hand against the life of brother, and the nations of the earth shall study war no more.

And then again, there are the sore and dreadful evils of temptation. Temptations



of every form and hue—thronging on every side—standing at every corner, and lurking in every avenue of life; drawing men aside and leading them on to destruction—filling the land with adultery and theft, and forgeries and lies, and causing sin to abound through all the earth. We need not dwell; for we have before spoken at large, of temptation and its due results. It is not however, an evil from which there is no redemption. It is incident to that discipline, through which man must needs pass, and necessary to the developement of the powers of the soul, and the strength of principle and duty. Its influence is weakened by every successful struggle against it, and when the trial shall have passed, it will cease to deceive the world. It was at this great evil of temptation, that the law aimed its sword, when it uttered its authoritative mandates, “Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness;” for these are commands, obedience to which, will require a struggle against temptation. For the removal of these evils also, Jesus



teaches us to pray, saying, "Lead us not into temptation;" and in the same faith we may add, "Deliver us from evil."

One other evil remains to be noted, as the last that will be removed. It is the evil of men's hearts—their thoughts and their purposes. If all others should have passed away, and deliverance from them were consummated, this might still remain. For this, however, there is a remedy, and thus deep and wide, is the application of the principles of the religion of our God. Thus far, one command only reaches. It is that last one in the Decalogue, which saith, "Thou shalt not covet." All else relates to the outward act. This alone takes cognizance of the thoughts, and forbids their exercise unto evil. And so also, of that last petition, that goes up from the altar of christian faith. It reaches the root of all evil, and plucks up the last noxious weed from the garden of the human soul. Thus it proclaims deliverance from evil, full and perfect; and this comes in its appropriate place, as the topstone of the temple—the keystone of the

4.

arch—the last crowning act of faith. Few indeed, even among those who have named Christ as their leader, have attained that assurance of faith, which enables them to pray without a doubt, for deliverance from the last remnant of evil; and to trust that this great consummation shall be effected on earth, is counted enthusiasm and folly; for by common consent this world is given over to the hopeless reign of evil. We have before said, that the Prayer and the Decalogue have reference to this world. Here the law is to be obeyed, and prayer made. Here only, the evils exist from which they seek and announce deliverance; and here they are to be fulfilled. Far in the distance, it may be, yet certain to come, is the time, when God shall be known and adored, as the Everlasting Father; when his name shall be hallowed—his kingdom shall come, and his will be done in earth, as it is in heaven—when bread shall be abundant and sure, to every human being—when men shall forgive their debtors as the hope to be forgiven of God—when temptations shall no

more throng man's pathway, and turn his feet in the ways of sin ; and when the deliverance of the race from the evils that so afflict and oppress, shall be universal and complete. For this the world hopes even against hope, and for this the blessed Savior hath taught us to pray, " Lifting up holy hands, without wrath or doubting."

" Lord for those days we wait,
Those days are in thy word foretold ;
Fly swifter, sun and stars, and bring
This promised age of gold."

SERMON XII.

THE CONSUMMATION.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever—Amen.

MATT. VI. 13.

The commentators informs us, that there is some doubt, whether these words were in the prayer as it was given by the Savior. In several of the ancient manuscripts, they are not found, and they are wanting in the record of the prayer as given by Luke. For these reasons they have been rejected by some, as forming no part of the original form of prayer. We shall not attempt to decide this controversy, with much confidence, but will simply remark, that whether the language was used by Christ or not, it is a proper and appropriate close of the prayer, and conveys important truth to the mind. For these reasons, if for no other, we shall make it the theme of our present discourse.


As the text stands, it gives the reason for the whole of the preceding prayer. Should the question be asked, why pray to God; and why ask of Him the blessings indicated? the answer would be, in the language of this passage, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever." This is the reason why prayer should be offered to Him, and why it may be offered in faith, nothing doubting. We propose, therefore, to take up these several clauses, in the order in which they occur, and show, at some length, that they are well calculated to encourage us to offer our petitions unto God, and give faith to the voice of prayer.

1. Thine is the kingdom.

A kingdom is a government, or reign; and whoever possesses a kingdom, has the right to rule, and reign, in that kingdom, according to the principles on which it is founded. Thus, the kingdom of Great Britain now belongs to Queen Victoria, and when we say that this kingdom is her's, we mean, that, the government pertains to her, and that she possesses the right to rule over the

realm, and to administer the laws, according to the tenure of the compact, which gives to her the kingdom. So in the case in hand. The kingdom belongs to God. The wide universe is His realm. Its throne belongs to the Most High, and over it, he has the right to reign, and he does reign while there is none that can resist his sway, or rightfully dispute His dominion. Sole author and Creator of all things—the giver of all life, and the maker of all worlds, he has of course, an unquestionable right to rule over, and control all that he has originated and made. For this reason, all prayer should be addressed unto Him, for He only can answer its petitions. It is so in all earthly governments. When the aid, or the protection of any government is invoked, the petition is presented to that man, or that body of men, in whom the ruling power is vested, and who can therefore, grant the required boon. The child can see, that it were folly to go anywhere else with the petition. If, for instance, a convicted criminal, who is undergoing the penalty of the

law, seeks a pardon ; it were folly for him to present a petition to that effect, to a private citizen. But he must go to the governor, with whom the pardoning power rests ; to him he must prefer his prayer, for the simple reason, that, his is the government, so far as that matter is concerned, and he only can answer the petition. In like manner, men should pray to God, because the kingdom is his ; and if it be true, that He is the supreme ruler of the universe, and that He sways the destinies of men, and angels ; then, what perfect folly it must be, to pray unto any but Him. None can aid, or help us, but by His permission ; no man on earth, nor even the highest angel that adores before the eternal throne, can bestow a blessing, but as God wills ; and we might as well pray to wood or stone as unto them. For this reason, we regard prayers to the Virgin Mary, and a whole calendar of saints, as a sort of idolatry, which would exalt the creature at the expense of the Creator, and draw men away from the great truth, that the kingdom is the Lord's,



which lies at the foundation of all true worship, and genuine prayer. Senseless mummery are they all. "Thine, O ! Lord, is the kingdom," and therefore, unto thee, and thee only, should prayer be made. In this truth, also, there is encouragement to pray, in the strength of undoubting faith. Consider how great, and how glorious is our God. He sitteth upon the throne of thrones, in the heavens, and sways the sceptre of government, over all the realms of a boundless universe. Angels and archangels bow before Him, and He stoopeth when He looketh upon the "giant earth " in all its vastness. If a being, so great and glorious, has condescended to notice man at all, it is a wonder of love. When the Psalmist considered the heavens, which God had made, and reflected upon that awful gulf of distance, that intervened between himself and the Infinite One, he exclaims, as in doubt, " Lord, what is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him ?" And now, what we wish to impress upon your minds, is, this truth.

If the infinite God, to whom pertains that kingdom which rules over all, has given unto the children of men access to him—if he has made it our duty, as it is a blessed privilege, to pray unto him, that bare fact is the proof, that He will hear, and answer prayer. For what on earth should He command us to pray unto him, if he will neither hear nor answer our prayers? So then, the greatness and the glory of God, the truth, that the kingdom is His; and that he permits and even requires us to present our petitions to Him, affords the best encouragement for us to pray, in full faith, nothing doubting. On this very fact, that unto God belongs the kingdom, the ancient servants of God build their highest hopes. Hence the Psalmist says, “All the ends of world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindred of the nations, shall come and worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord’s, and He is the governor among the nations.” And again; “All thy works shall praise thee O, Lord, and thy saints shall bless thee. They

shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and and talk of thy power, to make known unto the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of thy kingdom. Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth through all generations." "The Lord upholdeth all that fall and raiseth up all those that are bowed down." Such was the hopefulness with which the Psalmist looked upon the truth, that the kingdom is the Lord's; and for us, as often as we pray, saying, "Thine is the kingdom," we may renew our faith and gather fresh confidence in His love.

2. Thine is the power.

It sometimes happens, that the beings to whom pertains the right to reign, are feeble, and powerless. They cannot rule over the realm that belongs to them. They cannot administer the government, or execute the laws, because they have no power. The history of the world is not without numerous examples of the kind. Kings have sat upon their thrones. The right to reign conceded to them, and the kingdom acknow-

ledged to belong to them, and yet, they could effect nothing, for the good of the people, or glory of their kingdom, for the reason, that they lacked the power to govern, or the ability to execute the laws, and purposes of the government. In some cases, other nations, or kings, have come upon them, with the sword, and spoiled their kingdom; or the usurper has risen up, and wrested the sceptre from their hands. Hence, it will be perceived, that it is not enough that one sits upon a throne, and possesses the right to reign, and administer the laws of a kingdom. He must also have power to execute the laws—to put down all rebellion—to subdue his subjects to obedience, and to defend his dominions from the assaults of all enemies. Then is the kingdom his, in the highest sense, because he has the power necessary for its preservation and defence. In the case before us, we have the assurance, that the kingdom belongs to God. His is the throne of the universe, by virtue of the mere fact, that He is its Creator and author. The reins of

universal government are in His hands, and none may of right take them from Him. But this is not all. His also is the power, and He can vindicate His claim, and enforce His laws—command obedience, enforce submission, and protect and defend His kingdom against all those, that would pluck it out of His hands. No law can set itself up, against His law, and succeed and prosper. No rebellion against Him can prevail. No enemy, however mighty, can gird on his armor, and lift his sword successfully against the Lord of Hosts; nor can all the principalities of earth, and heaven, and hell combined, dethrone Him, or wrest the smallest province from His dominion. His is the power, that knows no control; and before the mighty workings of that power, rebellion shall cease, transgression shall end, and every high thing that exalteth itself against God, shall be brought low. This is an additional reason, why prayer should be made unto Him. It is easy to imagine an earthly king, legally in possession of a kingdom, seated upon its throne,

and occupying the position of a ruler. And yet, he may be so destitute of power, that no man would think for a moment, of presenting a petition to him, for aid or protection. But such is not the God, to whom we pray. Power belongs unto Him. In the physical world, He is supreme. He moulded the earth in the hollow of his hand, and sent it forth to roll upon its axis, and pursue its journey round the sun. He formed those distant orbs, those worlds and systems of worlds, which throng the immensity of space around us—He moves their ponderous spheres in their orbits, and all the harmonies of creation, are but the evidences of His mighty power. And so in the moral and spiritual world, we may see the stately goings forth of that power. “Man’s heart deviseth his way, but the Lord directeth his steps.” “He turneth the king’s heart, as the rivers of water are turned.” Seeing the innermost recesses of the soul; knowing all its thoughts and purposes, He can touch every spring of action, and by means of motives, always under His control, He can

mould man's spirit at His will, and turn the nations at His pleasure. There are powers on earth, that can control and bind the body but cannot reach the mind ; but to God belongs the power of moving with the spirit of omnipotence upon the soul, and of directing and governing the inner man, from which all outward acts proceed. Because such is His power, therefore should we pray unto Him, in full confidence, that there are no circumstances that will justify despair, and that His Almighty arm is never shortened, that it cannot save.

I will add here, that it is this lack of confidence in the power of God, which, in the church, at the present day, robs prayer of its faith. The general idea is, that the kingdom belongs of right to God ; but His power to enforce its laws, and to subdue its enemies, and protect and defend it, from the hand of the spoiler, these are the matters of doubt and fear. The opinion prevails, that long ago, ages before man was brought into being, there was a revolt, even in heaven itself ; and that the powerful leader of that

rebellion so far succeeded, as to draw away a third part of the inhabitants of that realm, from their allegiance to the God of all. With these dupes of his wiles, he descended to the regions below, and there established a kingdom, in opposition to the kingdom of God. For more than six thousand years, this powerful king has waged a perpetual war, upon the government of God ; and all the power of the Eternal, and the Almighty, has not been able to reduce him to submission. Nor will that object ever be accomplished. But, flushed with the victories already achieved, he shall continue his assaults upon God, and His kingdom ; and such shall be his success, that God will yield up to his sway, and abandon unto his dominion, a full share of the creatures of His creation. We are assured, moreover, that this success, on the part of Satan, is not due to any lack of disposition, or desire on the part of God, to oppose his march of triumph. On the contrary, He has from the beginning, been engaged in one continued warfare against him ; and we are expressly

told, that he has done, and is still doing, all that he can do, to deliver man from the power, and the wiles of the Devil. Why then pray to Him to do more? Why present your petitions for aid, to a being who has his hands full already, and who is engaged in the tug of war, with an adversary, who has proved himself a match for Him in every conflict, and in many, has come off conqueror? Well did the Savior say unto the ancient Sadducees, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." Unto this day, lack of confidence in the power of God, is the source of capital errors, both in faith and in practice. For this cause, it is, that many have given over a large portion of the human family to the hopeless dominion of sin, and Satan, and have ceased to petition God in their behalf, believing that no power of His can reach their case, or pluck them out of the hands of the adversary. Others, there are, who continue to pray, for the deliverance of the whole family of man, but they have no faith that their prayers will ever be heard, or

answered ; and all this, because they do not understand that word, which saith, "Thine is the power." Only let them learn the meaning of that word, and be assured that nothing is too hard for the Almighty, but that His power is equal to any, and every emergency ; and then, will they pray unto God always, and doubt not, that He is both able and willing to hear, and answer their prayers.

3. Thine is the glory.

This is the crowning excellency of the whole. It is quite possible for a man to possess a kingdom, and have all necessary power to rule and reign over that kingdom, and yet, be entirely destitute of true glory. He may so administer the government, and so exert his power, as to make his name infamous, instead of glorious. But God is glorious. The kingdom is his, and he has the right to reign over all. The power also is his ; and he is able to rule, and reign and work "all things after his own will." That power shall be so exercised, and that government shall be so conducted, that the glory also, shall be his


forever, and forevermore. No stain shall rest upon the banner of his kingdom, no shade or shadow shall obscure the bright sun of his glory ; nor shall the suspicion of a doubt remain, that he has done all things well. The glory of God is not, as some would seem to think, an attribute of God, but it is the intrinsic excellency, and loveliness, which attaches itself to his whole character. He is all powerful, wise and good—He is holy, just and true, and he is glorious in the perfection and harmony of these attributes. They all combine to make up his glory, and if he were divested of either of them ; if he should cease to be powerful, or wise, or good, or holy, or just, or true, he would cease to be glorious. Theologians have been in the habit of making a distinction between what is called the essential, and the declarative glory of God. The distinction is well founded, and is about the same as that which obtains between the character and the reputation of a man. Character stands for what a man is, in, and of himself : reputation relates to

what he is understood to be among his fellow men. So that, a man may possess a most excellent character, and yet, have no reputation, because his character is unknown. Thus, in the case in hand. The essential glory of God, is the real and intrinsic excellency of his character. His declarative glory is that measure of his character, which is revealed, and understood by his creatures. In both of these senses, it is true, that the glory belongs to God.

Infinitely perfect in himself, possessing all possible excellency ; all his attributes harmonizing in pure and unadulterated goodness, he cannot be otherwise in himself than the all-glorious. His ways are the transcript of himself ; his government is the manifestation of his divine nature, and from the very necessity of the case, it must be glorious as he is glorious. Not an act of cruelty and injustice, not a crushed and bleeding, or hopeless spirit, upon whom God has conferred an existence only that he might curse, shall rise up to mar the brightness of that glory that surrounds the eternal throne ; or

to tax God with a want of care for the interests of the subjects of his kingdom. No rebellious spirits shall stand it out, as successful competitors with God, or as being able to resist his sway, and bid eternal defiance to his efforts for their subjugation. But "Unto him, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear, surely shall say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." So shall his glory shine in the subjection of all things unto himself, and appear in the blessedness of that blissful period, when God shall be "all in all." Then shall the declarative glory also be his, for his name and his character shall be seen and known of all the creatures whom he has made. Then shall it be seen that man's exaltation and salvation is of God. That he is the author and the governor of all things, and for his glory they are and were created. Then will it appear, that in all the history of the past, from the very morning of creation up to the final consummation, God has been carrying on the gracious plans of his government; bringing order out of confusion,

good out of apparent evil; and thus working for good by means that he only sees to be most appropriate; but working surely to the end proposed. And then also, shall it be seen that even those dark and mysterious passages of his government, that our wisdom could not fathom, were ordered in the same infinite and unchanging goodness, and all tending to promote the best welfare of his creatures, and that we have equal reason to bless him for the sunshine and the storm; and in eternity we shall praise him alike for our sorrows and our joys. Thus shall his glory be declared, and every eye shall see it and every tongue confess, that it belongeth unto God. And this is the grand and glorious result, to which the eye of faith looks, and for which prayer should be made, and for the accomplishment of which, the kingdom and the power of God stand pledged. To it, let us look with a steadfast and undoubting faith, and with lively and joyful hope. And when we bow in prayer, before that infinite spirit upon whom we depend for all good let us thank him gratefully that he

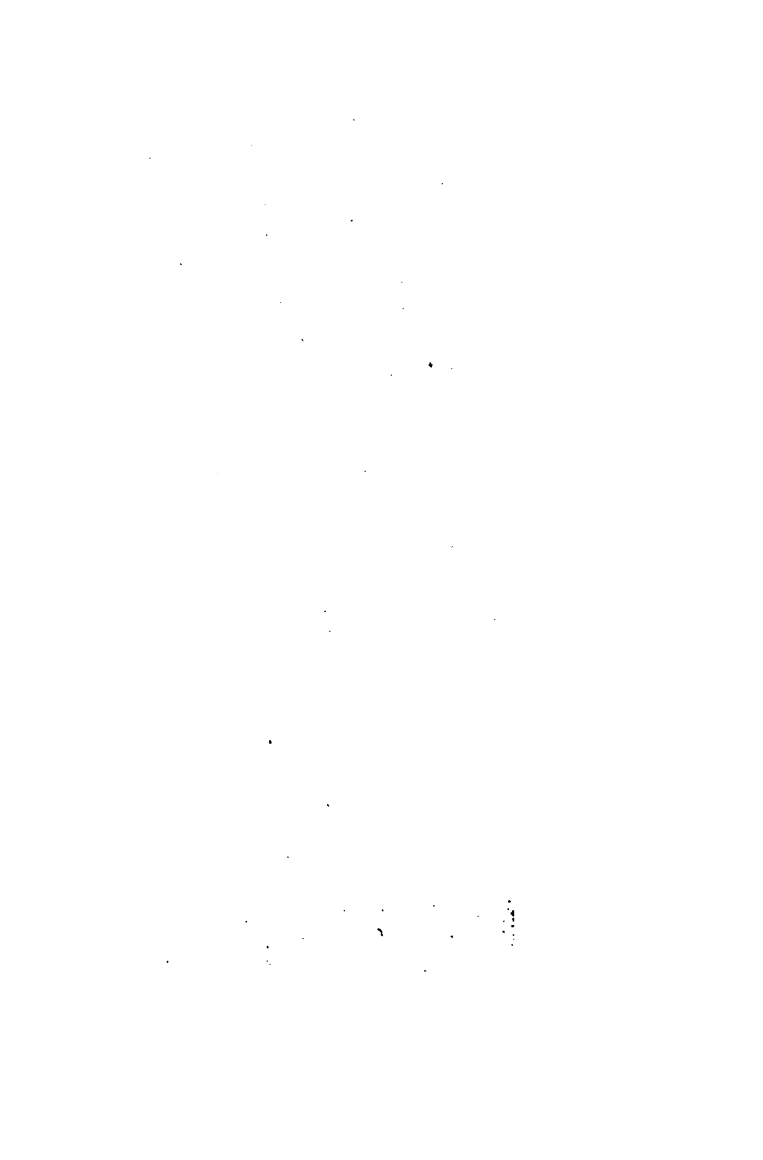


permits us to begin with the endearing words, "Our Father which art in heaven," and to end with the triumphant doxology, "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever." Amen.













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